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BEAR TRACKS IN INDOCHINA

An Analysis of Soviet Presence in Vietnam

Lieutenant Colonel
Dion W. Johnson

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An Analysis of Soviet Presence in Vietnam

by

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To Commander Perry W. Johnson, USN, Retired, and Mrs Terry Johnson

Thanks for all the encouraging letters written in red ink; even academia is an adventure.

and in memory of

Gen Jerome T. O'Malley and Mrs Diane O'Malley, the most capable and the most gracious. Thanks for sending me to school, boss. I only wish you could read this. Rest easy; we will try to pick up the load.

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FOREWORD

The USSR's first true foreign bases outside the Warsaw Pact came into existence in 1979 when Soviet forces occupied former American bases at Cam Ranh Bay and Da Nang, Vietnam. Expansion of the facilities at Cam Ranh Bay over the past six years created a major Soviet presence astride the lines of communication between Northeast Asia and the Indian Ocean, dangerously close to the critical American installations at Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Base, Philippine Islands. In this monograph, Lt Col Dion Johnson places the development of the Soviet presence at Cam Ranh into a perspective created by an analysis of the military, political, and economic interests of the United States, the Soviet Union, and the states of Southeast Asia. From this perspective, he explores the potential for further Soviet expansion of the base and the implications of increased Soviet military capabilities in Southeast Asia for the United States and its friends and allies in the region. By analyzing the development and potential growth of Soviet military power in Southeast Asia, Colonel Johnson has provided a significant contribution to the ongoing discussions of the future strategic role of the United States in Asia.

DENNIS M. DREW, Colonel, USAF
Director
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lt Col Dion W. Johnson

Lt Col Dion W. Johnson completed this study while assigned to the Airpower Research Institute and attending the Air War College at Maxwell AFB, Alabama. Colonel Johnson is a 1968 graduate of the Virginia Military Institute with a BS in biology and a 1976 graduate of the University of Southern California with an MS in systems management. He received his commission through the Air Force ROTC program.

Following completion of pilot training at Moody AFB, Georgia, in 1969, he was assigned to the 19th Tactical Air Support Squadron in the Republic of Vietnam for combat duty as an airborne forward air controller. He returned to Moody AFB as a T-37 instructor pilot and also served as an academic section chief.

In July 1974 Colonel Johnson took command of the 211th Field Training Detachment, Griffiss AFB, New York, and also flew the T-33 with the 49th Fighter Interceptor Squadron. In 1978 Colonel Johnson completed F-4E aircrew upgrade training at Homestead AFB, Florida, and was assigned as a fighter pilot to the 4th Tactical Fighter Wing at Seymour-Johnson AFB, North Carolina. He later served as an assistant flight commander and as the wing chief of flying safety at Seymour-Johnson.

In 1981 Colonel Johnson was assigned to Headquarters Pacific Air Forces (PACAF), where he served as chief, Tactical Air

Support Branch. He was then selected as the 1984–85 PACAF Visiting Research Fellow to the Airpower Research Institute at Maxwell.

Colonel Johnson is a command pilot with more than 2,200 flying hours and over 250 combat missions. His decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Meritorious Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster, the Air Medal with eight oak leaf clusters, the Air Force Commendation Medal with one oak leaf cluster, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with bronze palm. He has completed Squadron Officer School and Air Command and Staff College, and he graduated from the Air War College in the class of 1985.

He is married to the former Suzie Connelly of Oak Ridge, Tennessee. They have three children, Jason, Thomas, and Jessica.

PREFACE

I can only wonder how the discoverer of the great expanse between America and Asia felt when naming that area "Pacific." According to the dictionary, pacific means "tending to lessen conflict and to promote compromise; having a soothing appearance or effect; calm and tranquil." In that region of the world named Pacific, the United States has fought three wars in the last four and a half decades.

I also wonder how the discoverer of Cam Ranh Bay felt when first describing it as a place "to feel the emotion of being free." Cam Ranh Bay must have stirred some deep feelings within its discoverer to be so labeled. But with the Soviet socialist "bear" in current residence, freedom must again be patient.

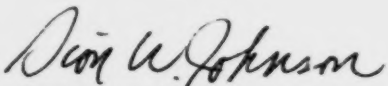
Peace, war, and freedom are fleeting in Asia. Since 1975 Asian regional dynamics have undergone such changes that the Soviets now occupy the real estate at Cam Ranh Bay that was developed in the 1960s with millions of United States dollars. How could this happen? What *about* the Soviet presence in Vietnam? How bad is the Soviet threat? What should the United States do about it?

This study is an analysis of these questions. It contrasts United States interests in East and Southeast Asia with those of the Soviet Union. And it examines the Soviet presence in Vietnam.

In the final analysis, the Soviet threat in Cam Ranh Bay is a moderate one. But it demands that decisions be made about resources—resources that were mostly programmed for other jobs. This study is intended to help those who must make such decisions.

I am deeply grateful to several people who fostered and enabled my accomplishment of this project. Special thanks go to Maj Gen Thomas G. McInerney for nominating and continuously supporting me in this project. I am also deeply grateful to the late Gen Jerome F. O'Malley for selecting me to represent the Pacific Air Forces as the 1984–85 Visiting Research Fellow at the Airpower Research Institute. To Dr Paul H. B. Godwin: your

wisdom and persistence convinced me I knew more than I knew, and I thank you for both. Grateful thanks go to Lt Col Keith Geiger for asking me the right questions at the right time and to Lt Col Ralph Cossa for direction, sources, and ideas. Warm thanks also go to Cols Donald Stevens and Dennis Drew for guidance at crucial crossroads. For special support and encouragement, I am also very thankful to Lt Cols Bob Sims, Larry Short, and Bob Oertel. To Preston Bryant, editor extraordinaire, thanks for leaving my original ideas and, from all future readers, thanks for removing 20 percent of the fluff. For somehow getting it all on paper, I am especially grateful to the staff of the Production Division of the Air University Press.



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INTRODUCTION

Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam! What does it mean to you? If you were involved in the Vietnam conflict, you might have been there. At the least, Cam Ranh was a routine name on the evening news. If you were 10 years old in 1975, when South Vietnam fell, you probably paid little attention.

But 10 years later, Cam Ranh was back with a new twist—the Soviets instead of the Americans were the "guests"; and their presence there is of grave concern to Americans charged with safeguarding US interests in Southeast Asia. Cam Ranh Bay made the news again. "The Soviets put MiG-23s there." Oh, really? "And they added ships, long-range bombers, and lots of other stuff, too." How can that be? What precipitated this turning of the tables in Southeast Asia?

Those who keep an eye on Southeast Asia saw the Soviets' slow but steady buildup in Vietnam. It is no secret that from spring 1979 growing numbers of Soviet ships, aircraft, and other military equipment have been observed at Cam Ranh Bay. Do not assess this Soviet presence by the "bean-count" method, however; geographic, logistic, and political factors may limit the Soviet potential in Vietnam.

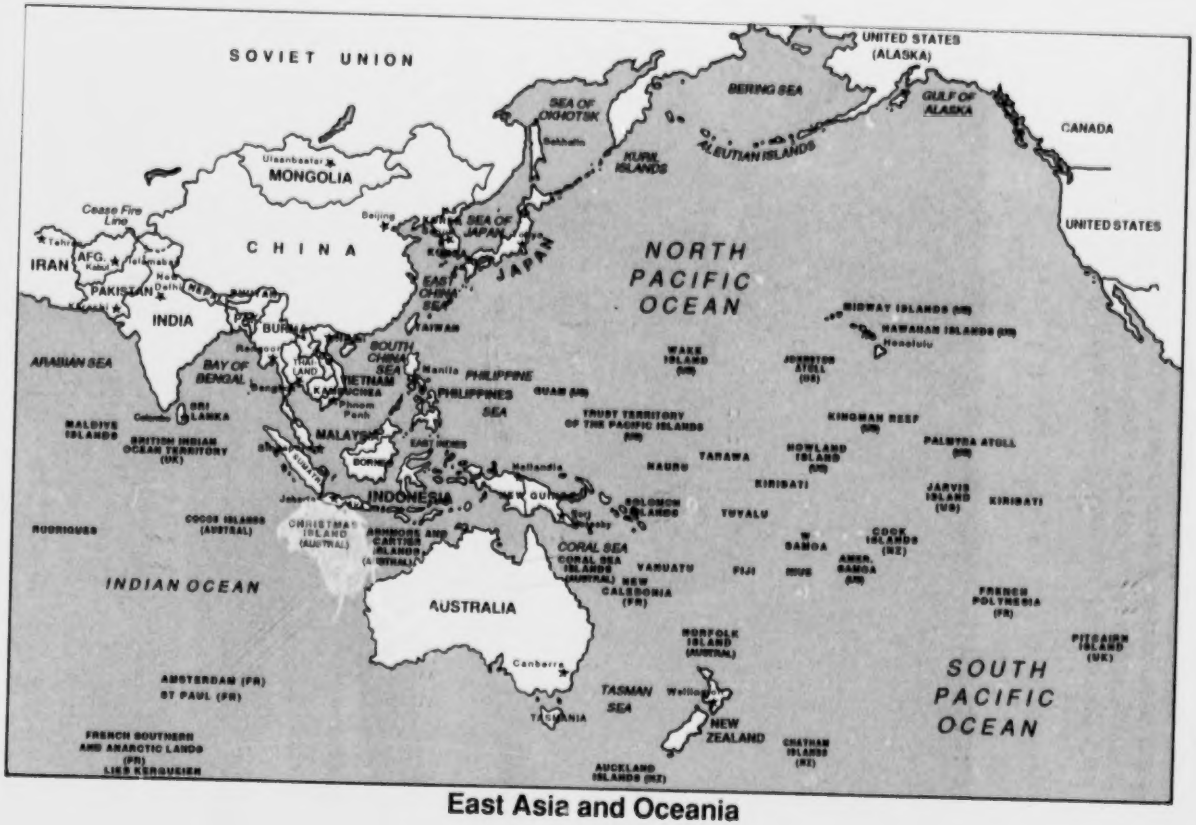
Need the United States be concerned? A review of US interests and objectives in Southeast Asia in the context of regional stability, economic dynamism, strategic values, and military interests will provide the answer.

At this point, it is appropriate to state that this work is not a strategic appraisal of Asia. It does not include Southwest Asia; nor does it dwell on detailed aspects of Northeast Asia. Neither is it intended to be an analysis of US foreign policy alternatives in Southeast Asia, although statements and background data supporting the Reagan administration's policy on East Asia are included. Nor is this work a current intelligence briefing or targeteer's reference of Cam Ranh Bay, for the point of this work

is made without unnecessary classification which would limit the audience.

What remains is an unclassified analysis of Soviet presence and potential in Southeast Asia. The focus is primarily on Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. We are often cautioned in studying the Soviet bear that, although he constitutes a threat, he is *not* 10 feet tall. But the Soviet presence constitutes a growing and significant threat to US interests in East Asia. There are some real constraints on the Soviets, and they will probably limit future development; but even with constraints, the Soviet threat in Vietnam requires hard decisions on allocating and posturing US defense resources.

The Soviet Union has transformed Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, and its adjoining airfield into a major forward deployment base enhancing Soviet military capabilities in the Pacific, Southeast Asian, and Indian Ocean regions. In extending its military reach, the USSR is tenaciously pursuing increased access to land, sea, and air facilities for use by its forces in a growing number of third-world nations.



East Asia and Oceania

CHAPTER 1

A DECADE OF CHANGE IN EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

> To understand the future, you must understand the Pacific.... In economic development, in the growth of free institutions, and in growing global influence, the Pacific is increasingly where the action is. As important as it was a few years ago, it is more important today. And it will be even more so tomorrow.
>
> George P. Shultz
> US Secretary of State

The Soviet bear is once again making tracks in Indochina. In order to examine this Soviet presence, one must first review US interests and objectives in East Asia to establish a perspective for analysis. To avoid semantic difficulties, the following definitions will apply: (1) *national interests*—conditions a state seeks to sustain or create (e.g., to resist Soviet expansionism); (2) *national policy*—the methods used to achieve an objective or objectives (e.g., to foster alliances designed to resist Soviet expansionism); (3) *national policy objectives*—what a state specifically wants to achieve through a particular policy (e.g., to revise the US-Japan mutual security agreement into a genuine collective defense agreement directed against the USSR).

Several changes have taken place in East Asia since the early seventies. Many of these regional changes have had stabilizing effects.

Stabilizing Factors

> We hear a lot these days about the promise of the Pacific. What people speak of most often is the remarkable economic dynamism of the region. But equally remarkable, especially in light of recent history, is that the region—with the notable exception of Cambodia—is basically at peace. Without peace the region would not have won this economic prosperity.
>
> There are many reasons for this stability, and it would be wrong to say that we brought it about by ourselves. But America's renewed commitment to the peace of the region has been important. That the Soviets have been unable to translate their increased military presence in the region into political or economic gains is in large measure because our military has been there. And they have been ready. This is a salute we diplomats owe to our military.
>
> But we can't afford to be complacent. As important as it is to maintain a military presence, there are challenges to stability that require more than just our strength alone to meet.[1]

The following discussion sets a frame of reference for further analysis of American and Soviet interests in East Asia. The structure, approach, and authority are drawn heavily from Donald S. Zagoria's "The Strategic Environment in East Asia," in *Soviet Policy in East Asia*.[2]

Mexican Standoff between Communist States

Precipitated by the Sino-Soviet split and the demise of direct Western presence in Southeast Asia, old ethnic rivalries reemerge without clear victors.[3] Oddly enough, this situation contributes to regional stability. The Soviet Union and China, China and Vietnam, Vietnam and Chinese-supported Communists in Cambodia (Kampuchea)—all resume adversarial postures after being interrupted by the rise of communism and the anticolonial wars in Indochina.[4] By the time the United States withdrew from Vietnam, the monolithic Communist front against the West had deteriorated and had been replaced by a reversion to rivalries that have existed for ten centuries.[5]

Each of the Communist actors now faces old and new adversaries. The Soviet Union faces NATO, China, Japan, and the United States. China is faced by the USSR and its recent ally, Vietnam. Vietnam is surrounded by China, United States forward bases, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).[6]

Oddly, though, this convoluted Communist pressure is not massed against the non-Communist East Asian states. What results is a sort of Mexican standoff whereby no single Communist state can be allowed by the others to be the clear victor. For the time being, the Communist states prefer that key strategic positions be held by the United States rather than each other. For example, China is on record as supporting the US-Japanese alliance; and the Soviet Union and China accommodate the United States in South Korea.[7] The Soviets and the Chinese are also making overtures to ASEAN; the question therefore arises, if the Communist parties in Thailand, Malaysia, or the Philippines prevail, whose side would they be on?[8]

China's Inclination toward the United States

China's "turn to the West" has had tremendous impact in East Asia. A series of Chinese actions since the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, chronicled here by Zagoria, had both global and regional impact; and they seem to have had a stabilizing effect by constraining Soviet activity.[9]

- The People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States have established full diplomatic relations.
- China and Japan have negotiated a peace treaty; and the Chinese support NATO and ASEAN.
- China invaded Vietnam, hindering the Vietnamese drive against Cambodia.
- Chinese leaders visited Romania and Yugoslavia to support these nations' independence from Moscow.

• China supported third world protests against the Soviet-sponsored invasion of Angola and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

• China joined the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, thus opening the door for an influx of technology, credit, and trade.[10]

Robust Resurgence of Japan

Japan's reemergence as a major player in East Asia has had an overall stabilizing effect. The Japanese have assertively declared their intentions to defend sea-lanes out to 1,000 nautical miles of the home islands, and they are actively participating in joint exercises with US forces.[11]

By no means intimidated by Moscow, Tokyo has firmly stated opposition to a number of Soviet initiatives. Japan maintains sovereign claims over the Soviet-occupied Kurile Islands north of Hokkaido. Diplomatically, Japan berated the Soviets for their invasion of Afghanistan and admonished both Moscow and Hanoi for the Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Cambodia by imposing "stiff sanctions."[12] Further, Moscow reacted strongly against the Sino-Japanese peace treaty.

In addition to Japan's spectacular economic world trade success, strong regional trade relations with ASEAN nations foster stability through economic growth. Internationally, Japan provides economic assistance to Pakistan, Thailand, Turkey, and even the Republic of Korea (ROK).[13] In all respects, Japan's resurgent growth has been stabilizing throughout the region.

American Reaffirmation to Asia

After the American pullout from Vietnam, the United States turned to place primary emphasis on NATO commitments. An early Carter administration plan to withdraw American combat troops from South Korea was interpreted by Asian leaders as a

signal that America no longer regarded small Asian states as very important. Their faith in the US defense umbrella was shaken.[14] From the Southeast Asian viewpoint, the American rapprochement with China conveyed a drift away from regional concerns and toward global posturing. Finally, Taiwan felt sold out by the loss of diplomatic status with the United States.[15]

All this paints a dim view of America from the Asian perspective. But there was a rebirth of interest in the latter Carter years: US naval presence was bolstered in South Asia, the Korean pullout was canceled, new US weapon systems were brought into Korea and Japan, and military and economic assistance was stepped up to help Asian allies like Thailand and Pakistan.[16]

The credibility of the United States in East Asia began to rise more sharply after Reagan took office; current US defense policy for Asia and the Pacific stresses the importance of US relations with allies and friendly countries. According to Richard J. Armitage, assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, "The United States has made a fundamental decision that we are a Pacific nation, that we will remain a Pacific power and a force for peace and stability in the region and that the future lies in the Pacific."[17] This is backed up by a strong US foreign policy on East Asia:

> Make no mistake; the United States is committed permanently to the Pacific, and President Reagan's program to restore America's defense capabilities is giving us the wherewithal to carry out the commitments and perform the tasks essential to peace. We shall not shirk from the role as others take their place beside us. We seek the increased strength of our allies not as a substitute but as a complement to our own efforts.[18]

Feedback from an ASEAN spokesman indicates that Southeast Asian friends and allies believe that America will live up to its treaties and obligations for the time being—at least to the extent of Nixon's Guam doctrine.[19]

Unity of ASEAN

Zagoria summarizes the stunning success of ASEAN's contribution to regional stability:

> Another important factor in the stability of East Asia is the extraordinary development of ASEAN, the first successful regional organization in the history of Southeast Asia. The [six] ASEAN countries—Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand [and Brunei]—have adopted a common front against the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and they have played a major role in the United Nations and other world forums in keeping this issue at the forefront of world attention. As a result the ASEAN countries have also taken cooperative steps to counter such threats. They have also adopted a common front in international [aid] agencies and they have devolved joint strategies to deal with the industrial countries, and they have taken cooperative steps to defuse territorial disputes and to discourage the growth of secessionist movements within their borders.[20]

Although ASEAN does not bind its signatories to collective defense, the member nations have cooperated on issues of interoperability and standardization of weaponry. Some members conduct frequent exercises for defense cooperation. Since the fall of Saigon, the ASEAN countries have become increasingly aware that mutual support and a unified front are necessary to ward off unwanted exploitation.[21]

Korean Status Quo

North and South Korea, armed to the teeth and within spitting distance of each other at Panmunjom, have resisted resumption of hostilities for over three decades. Two reasons for this are the US-ROK security agreement and the ROK-deployed US forces.[22] Neither the Soviets nor the Chinese want to risk a renewed Korean conflict.

> Under present circumstances both Moscow and Beijing have compelling reasons to avoid a new Korean war. The Russians, for their part, could not afford to let North Korea win or lose such a war. A North Korean loss in

a new Korean war would have profound political and psychological consequences on the Soviet Union's other allies and treaty partners. But there could be no North Korean victory over South Korea without Moscow's running the risk of a Soviet-American military confrontation. Moreover, even if North Korea could somehow come to dominate South Korea, a unified communist Korea might eventually gravitate toward China and severely complicate security problems on Moscow's southern flank. At the very least, if Korea were to be unified by the North, Soviet leverage on North Korea would be greatly reduced. Thus, there are no compelling reasons for Moscow to support North Korean efforts to unify all of Korea, much less to risk a war in the process.

The Chinese have equally compelling reasons to avoid a new Korean war. As long as Beijing is preoccupied with the threat from Russia and Vietnam it has no desire to involve itself in a war with the United States in Korea. On the contrary, Beijing's interests are best served by a gradual rapprochement between North and South Korea and between North Korea and the West.[23]

Success of East Asian Free Enterprise

The spectacular growth of trade in East Asia promotes regional stability through both global and regional cooperation. This unprecedented growth of free enterprise has linked Japan, the most successful industrialized democracy, with most of the world's trading nations. Japan's largest trading partner is the United States, with a 1985 combined imports and exports total of over $91 billion—a 77-percent increase in five years.[24] Japanese trade momentum has been accelerating despite the odds. During the 1960s, Japan's GNP grew at more than 10 percent annually.[25] It has overcome two oil crises, dealt with stagflation, increased labor productivity, and resumed a 5–6 percent annual rate of growth. By the late 1970s Japan had overtaken the Soviet Union as the world's second largest industrial power.[26] And Japan's involvement in the world market has a stabilizing effect on East Asia.

Other leading economic dynamos in East Asia include South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. These four nations have averaged at least 8-percent annual growth since the late sixties.[27] Also well above average for developing countries are

Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia (and until 1982 the Philippines). These three countries have averaged over 6-percent annual GNP increases.[28]

> One of the most important consequences of this rapid growth is that the countries in the region are beginning to develop a sense of regional community and shared interest. Already the United States trades more with the Pacific than any other part of the world including Western Europe, and US trade with ASEAN is growing faster than US trade with most other parts of the world. Trade ties are also growing between Canada and the Pacific, between Australia and ASEAN, between South Korea and ASEAN, and so on. As China industrializes, it too is bound to increase its trade with other Pacific countries. Already in the past few years Chinese trade with both the United States and Japan has increased by substantial amounts."[29]

Destabilizing Factors

East Asia is not a utopia, however; some very real destabilizing factors continue to agitate the region. Soviet diplomatic and economic efforts with Asian nations have historically failed, leaving Moscow the option of flexing intimidating military power to gain attention. And direct Soviet support of Vietnamese aggression in Cambodia, which has almost no international respect, continues to cause unsteadiness. Further, the Marcos/Aquino transition of Philippine power remains unsteady and the ongoing Communist insurgency there is a volatile situation. Finally, the US-PRC-Taiwan relationship still simmers on the back burner.

Soviet Buildup in Asia

Reacting to the Sino-Soviet conflict in the mid-1960s, the Soviets began a massive buildup of military strength in Soviet Asia. They fear a two-front war, in Europe and in the Far East, and Soviet ground force presence in Asia has more than doubled to over 500,000 troops.[30] The Soviets have placed primary emphasis

on improving their ability to project military power throughout the region. "For example, about one-third of the Soviets' . . . intermediate-range ballistic missile force is currently deployed in the Soviet far east. There has been a near one-for-one replacement of aging tactical fighters with new-generation, long-range attack aircraft." There has also been a steady increase in the number of Backfire bombers in the Soviet far east, threatening sea-lanes as far away as Midway, Guam, and the Philippines.[31]

Meanwhile, the Soviet Pacific Fleet, largest of Moscow's four fleets, is being expanded and modernized to enhance its power projection capability. In 1985 it comprised almost a third of the overall Soviet navy. On any given day 50–60 Soviet naval units can be found operating throughout the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean.[32] The Soviets have maintained a continuous naval combatant presence at Cam Ranh Bay since the spring of 1979. Long-range reconnaissance Tu-95 Bear D and Tu-142 Bear F antisubmarine warfare (ASW) aircraft, and Tu-16 Badger strike aircraft are now based there. In December 1984 a squadron of MiG-23 Flogger aircraft was assembled on Cam Ranh Bay airfield. "These air assets pose a direct threat to US Naval and air facilities in the Philippines and the vital sea lines which stretch throughout southeast Asia."[33]

Vietnam: A Soviet Ally

Soviet acquisition of Vietnam as an ally came through no adeptness in political maneuvering. The Soviets were simply standing ready in 1978 after Hanoi's appeals to the world for aid, principally from the United States, were turned down.

Gaining virtually unrestricted access to Vietnam has been at considerable expense, however; since 1979 the Soviets have been contributing $4–5 million per day in military and economic aid to Vietnam.[34] This aid has underwritten Vietnam's invasion and continued subjugation of Cambodia, which almost rivals the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in drawing international condemnation. Adding to world outrage, the Soviets' shooting

down a Korean airliner in 1983 brought about a record high in world condemnation.

Philippine Vulnerability

In February 1986 the 20-year rule of President Ferdinand Marcos came to an end following one of the most controversial elections in Philippine history. Marcos claimed victory over presidential challenger Corazon Aquino in the 7 February election, and the National Assembly subsequently declared him the winner. Aquino supporters, however, repudiated that verdict, claiming that the election had been stolen through violence and massive electoral fraud. They announced plans for a nationwide civil disobedience campaign to force Marcos to resign. A decisive development came on 23 February when Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Lt Gen Fidel Ramos, chief of staff of the armed forces, renounced their loyalty to Marcos and called for his resignation. Two days later Marcos and his wife Imelda fled the country aboard a US Air Force jet. Corazon Aquino was inaugurated as head of a provisional government, and the United States moved quickly to recognized the new government.

Aquino has been faced with a welter of political and economic problems. In addition, the exiled Marcos apparently has continued to encourage his followers in the Philippines to create disturbances that will help destabilize the Aquino government. Meanwhile, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), continue to thrive. The government has held the first open negotiations with the CPP in 17 years, but there are elements within the government that oppose any national conciliation with the Communist rebels. A Communist takeover of the Philippines would threaten economic and political stability throughout Asia.

All of these factors impact on US interests because they affect the security of US basing at Clark Air Base and Subic Bay Naval Base. If these bases are lost to US access, the regional and global balance of power will be directly affected because alternative

basing options in Southeast Asia do not offer the same advantages for the projection of US military power in the region.

United States, China, and the Taiwan Connection

Another significant change in regional dynamics has been American recognition of the People's Republic of China. The PRC has become increasingly pro-West, even though Sino-US relations are still inhibited by US arms sales to Taiwan. But the security assistance to Taiwan did fall off when the Carter administration broke off formal relations with Taiwan in 1979. When the United States established formal diplomatic ties with the PRC, the mainland Chinese saw promise for a reunited China. But this relationship was clouded by the Reagan administration's reaffirmation of its policy of selling arms to Taiwan. In fact, US arms transfers to Taiwan led to a crisis that was defused only when the United States agreed in late 1981 to gradually reduce arms sales to Taiwan.[35] Taiwan's future was a topic of discussion when Reagan visited the PRC in the spring of 1984.

> The President stated clearly to the Chinese . . . that we will honor our commitments, that we expect the Chinese to honor theirs and that within such a framework this issue is one for the Chinese on both sides of the strait to resolve by themselves. Our role and abiding concern . . . is that any resolution be a peaceful one.[36]

Summary

Imagine Asia as a great chessboard. There are two sides—ours and theirs. But each chess piece has its own individual moves, which are not always in the direction of its "team"; and each time a piece moves, it affects the total situation.

NOTES

1. Paul D. Wolfowitz, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, speech, National Defense University (NDU) Pacific Symposium, Honolulu, Hawaii, 22 February 1985.

2. Donald S. Zagoria, "The Strategic Environment in East Asia," in *Soviet Policy in East Asia*, ed. Donald S. Zagoria (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 1–27.

3. Ibid., 5–13. I chose to accept Zagoria's analysis of the seven stabilizing factors.

4. It is the policy of the US Bureau of Places and Names to use *Cambodia* as the preferred term (rather than Kampuchea).

5. Zagoria, 5.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 7.

10. Monte R. Bullard, "The US-China Defense Relationship," *Parameters* 13 (March 1983): 44.

11. Zagoria, 7–9.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 9–10.

15. T. R. Milton, "Rediscovering the Pacific," *Air Force Magazine* 67, no. 5 (May 1984): 37.

16. Zagoria, 9.

17. Richard J. Armitage, "The United States' Role in the Pacific," speech, NDU Pacific Symposium, Honolulu, Hawaii, 22 February 1985.

18. George P. Shultz, "Asia-Pacific and the Future," *Department of State Bulletin* 84, no. 2090 (September 1984): 6.

19. President Richard M. Nixon, in his 25 July 1969 policy speech, later known as the Guam doctrine, told the world: "One, that [the United States] would keep [its] treaty commitments . . . but, two, that as far as the problems of internal security are concerned, as far as the problems of military defense, except for the threat of a major power involving nuclear weapons, that the United States is going to encourage and has a right to expect that this problem will be increasingly handled by, and the responsibility for it taken by, the Asian nations themselves." See *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Richard Nixon, 1969* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), 543–56. Leading ASEAN officials believe if the USSR attacks an ASEAN nation, then the United States will come to the rescue. This is based on comments from Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, former foreign minister of Malaysia, addressing the NDU Pacific Symposium, Honolulu, Hawaii, 22 February 1985.

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24. Memoranda by Marva Thompson and David Mogenson, Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Foreign Trade Room, March 1986, on file at USCINCPAC J335, Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii.

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34. Sheldon Simon, "Davids and Goliaths: Small Power–Great Power Security Relations in Southeast Asia," *Asian Survey* 23, no. 3 (March 1983): 302.

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CHAPTER 2

US INTERESTS IN EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Need US policy be affected by Asian dynamics? Security agreements provide the main basis for US-Asian ties, but contemporary economics and increased Soviet presence challenge the articulation of US interests and US-East Asian foreign policy.

Asian Alliances

During the cold war years after World War II, in those areas of the great chessboard *not* controlled by the seemingly monolithic Communist influence, seven mutual defense arrangements were established between 1947 and 1960. The United States provided the overarching umbrella of deterrence. The Rio Pact of 1947 applied to Latin America, NATO in 1949 applied to Europe; the other five applied to Pacific and East Asian nations.

ANZUS Treaty, 1951

The aim of the ANZUS treaty—which links Australia, New Zealand, and the United States—is to strengthen "the fabric of peace in the Pacific area."[1] The relationship has worked well, grown strong, and promoted regional stability. Australia and New Zealand have fought with the United States in three wars from World War II to Vietnam. Yet just as important as the treaty itself are the linkages that the United States makes through it: Australia and New Zealand maintain formal relationships with ASEAN (1974 and 1975, respectively) and security links with Malaysia and Singapore through the Five Power Defense Arrangement (which

includes Great Britain), the South Pacific Commission of 1947, and the South Pacific Forum of 1972. Australia and New Zealand are sources of aid and guarantors of security for a number of South Pacific island nations, thereby helping to deny Soviet access to the South Pacific.[2]

Threatening the viability of this treaty as a tripartite alliance is the New Zealand antinuclear policy directed at the United States government. The US reaction to Prime Minister David Lange's policy of not allowing nuclear-powered/armed ships to visit New Zealand ports was not to abandon its "neither confirm nor deny" nuclear policy but to question New Zealand's role in ANZUS. Assistant Secretary of State Paul Wolfowitz puts it this way: "With words, New Zealand assures us that it remains committed to ANZUS. But by its deeds, New Zealand has effectively curtailed its operational role in ANZUS. A military alliance has little meaning without military cooperation. New Zealand can't have it both ways."[3]

The US Defense Department, like the State Department, expects alliance partners to accept the risk associated with maintaining the peace. Alliance partners must interact; they cannot fight together effectively if they do not train together. Adm Sir Anthony Synnot, former chief of Australia's Defense Forces Staff, contends that, in addition to losing the political aspect of the alliance, both the United States and New Zealand lose more than the treaty specifies.

> The United States loses (1) an ally of long standing; (2) a foothold in a strategic region; (3) influence in the Five Power Defense Arrangement with Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Malaysia, and Singapore; and (4) a united deterrent front. New Zealand loses (1) intelligence sources; (2) training in allied large force exercises; (3) access to NATO operational publications; (4) logistic support for its forces; and (5) influence.[4]

The United States has adjusted its security cooperation with New Zealand. Among the actions taken were cancellation of combined multilateral and bilateral exercises and intelligence sharing.[5] Despite this shadow over ANZUS, however, the United States-Australia relationship remains strong and close; and Australia contributes significantly to the maintenance of regional stability and security.[6]

Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, 1954

The Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, also called the Manila Pact, established the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) and committed the signatories—Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, United Kingdom, and the United States—to resist aggression against the Asian members and other regional territories the members might designate. This pact required only that "each party act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional process."[7] The treaty lost mutual support when the US government maintained it was required (per the "other regional territories" provision) to defend South Vietnam, whereupon the other signatories acknowledged no such obligation. Pakistan withdrew from the treaty in 1973; and in 1975 the remaining parties agreed to disband SEATO. US obligations under the treaty remain in force, however, and one of these obligations is to come to the aid of Thailand if necessary.[8]

US-Philippines Bilateral Defense Treaty, 1951

The US-Philippines Bilateral Defense Treaty regards "an armed attack on the Philippines as dangerous to peace and safety" and "requires the United States to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes."[9] Two other agreements have bearings on this treaty:

- Rent-free 99-year lease. Negotiated in March 1947, this agreement gives to the United States the "exclusive right to use, operate, and control 23 Army, Navy, and Air Force bases in the islands." Over the years, this lease has been "renegotiated and modified several times."[10]
- 1979 Basing Agreement. This separate agreement "reduced the numbers of bases and land areas and shortened the lease term to expire in 1991."[11] More significant was the return of sovereignty (of the bases) to the Philippines, with the stipulation that US commanders would conduct unhampered operations and exercise

command and control over US forces. A five-year renegotiation cycle, under which the latest negotiations (1983) resulted in a US best-effort pledge of $900 million in security assistance, was also inserted.[12] President Aquino maintains she will honor the military bases agreement with the United States at least until 1991, when it is due to be renegotiated.

US-Korean Bilateral Defense Treaty, 1953

Treaty relations between the United States and South Korea are relatively stable in comparison to other treaty relations in the region. Each party "recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific area on either of the parties . . . would be dangerous to its own peace and safety" and "would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes."[13]

US-Japanese Bilateral Defense Treaty, 1960

When this treaty was written, Japan was subjugated to a purely defensive role. The signatories' obligations are to meet threats to

> the security of Japan or international peace and security *in the Far East* interpreted as *not* outside the Far East. Each country "recognizes that an armed attack against either party *in the* territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes." This contrasts with the NATO treaty, which stipulates "the parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them *in* Europe or North America shall be considered *an attack against them* all" [emphasis added].[14]

More recently, Japan's role in this security agreement has been criticized as out of balance with the contemporary East Asian threat scenario; and this has sparked controversy over Japan's capability versus Japan's desire to assume a large share of the defense burden. In response, the last two Japanese administrations have gradually made quality and quantity improvements in Japan's Self-Defense Forces. They have also assumed a more ambitious defense role

(including the protection of sea-lanes out to 1,000 miles of Japanese territory).

Bilateral Alignments

In comparison to the viability of the North Atlantic Treaty, where a geographic demarcation clearly separates Western allies from the Eastern bloc, a formal, US-backed multilateral alliance fusing the free Pacific is impractical. The vastness of Asia, coupled with the diverse interests of its free countries and its closed societies, would forestall such an arrangement.[15]

For example, the Sino-US rapprochement, as viewed by the Indonesians and Malaysians, is threatening. In the mid-1960s, the PRC had a "generally aggressive" posture in Southeast Asia; it supported subversive activities conducted by ethnic Chinese rebel groups in both Indonesia and Malaysia.[16] The Indonesians and Malaysians are not likely to forget; and when the United States supplies arms to the PRC, they again feel the threat of Chinese-supported subversion.

Another example illustrating the practicality of bilateral alignments is the US-PRC-Taiwan situation. It is in the interests of the United States to keep its relationship with Taiwan less than formal, for anything more would disturb the great power stability currently enjoyed by the United States and the People's Republic of China.

Growing Trade

United States trade with Asia-Pacific partners is growing rapidly. It has exceeded trade with the European Economic Community since 1972, and it has surpassed overall trade with Europe since 1978. In 1985 Asia-Pacific trade accounted for 33 percent of all US foreign trade, making Southeast Asia America's largest foreign trading region.[17]

US/Asia-Pacific Trade[18]
(in Billions of Dollars)

1972	*1979*	*1985*
$24.5	$95.2	$185.1

The largest share of 1985 US/Asia-Pacific trade was with Japan—49 percent, or over $91 billion.[19] But the other newly industrialized countries of Asia have also experienced rapid economic growth. Since 1970 South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong have averaged close to 8-percent annual growth.[20] The ASEAN countries have grown to produce a combined gross national product of over $200 billion; and they account for 13 percent of Japan's overseas economy.[21]

While rapid Asian economic growth is regionally stabilizing, it causes a problem for domestic business in the United States. It is in the interest of the United States to have a favorable balance of trade; that is, more capital coming in than going out. But it is also in the interest of the United States to see that its Asian trading partners prosper so they can be self-sufficient friends and allies. Trade imbalance is most acute between the United States and Japan. The balance of trade has increasingly favored the Japanese.

US/Trade Deficit (vis-à-vis Japan)[22]
(in Billions of Dollars)

1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
$16	$20	$23	$40	$46

The Japanese have flooded the United States with certain exports while maintaining protectionist tariffs and red tape against many US imports. These actions draw strong protests from the US business community. From a US business perspective, the US government should combat this imbalance by levying formal restrictions on imports. However, this is a shortsighted solution from the viewpoint of US foreign policymakers. Such trade restrictions would have a detrimental effect on US relations with Japan and other Asian countries because most of the United States' Asian trading partners are experiencing export-led growth, and

their primary market continues to be the United States. Therefore, the US State Department policy is to continue pressing the Japanese business community to lighten up and allow more US products into Japan.

Soviet Presence

One problem challenging the United States is that of convincing East Asian friends and allies that the growing Soviet presence poses a significant threat to them. Strategically, the US alignment with China is the main stabilizing factor in East Asia; it balances the Soviet threat at least to the extent that the Soviet Union must pay attention to its Asian front.

Japan is becoming increasingly aware of Soviet encroachment from the north, but the Republic of Korea, although one of America's staunchest allies, is chiefly threatened by Pyongyang rather than Moscow. Collectively, the ASEAN nations agree that the Soviets are not their prime concern. Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines are more concerned about the Vietnamese threat than the Soviet threat. Malaysia and Indonesia worry that the Chinese pose a greater threat than either the Vietnamese or the Soviets. Australia and New Zealand, historically staunch supporters of US interests, do not currently feel directly threatened by the Soviets.

The strategic problem facing the United States is that its forces in East and Southeast Asia are outgunned by the Soviets. In order to provide an effective balance of power, US friends and allies need to articulate and actively demonstrate support of the United States, including intentions to rally in the event of a US-Soviet confrontation.

US Interests

The US Department of State is charged by the president to establish foreign policy objectives in support of US national

interests.[23] There are many ways to describe or categorize interests. Instead of listing interests in strategic, military, political, and economic categories, the Reagan administration focuses its East Asian policy on economic reality, maintaining a strong overseas presence, and demonstrating a willingness to engage in open diplomacy.[24]

US Secretary of State George P. Shultz uses three main "watch words" to describe US policy in the region: *realism*, *strength*, and *negotiation*.

> *Realism.* Realism requires us to acknowledge that economic growth lies at the heart of progress around the Pacific.
>
> *Strength.* No course of economic development and no effort at diplomacy can succeed in an environment of fear borne by a sense of weakness. . . . Make no mistake; the United States is committed permanently to the Pacific, and President Reagan's program to restore America's defense capabilities is giving us the wherewithal to carry out the commitments and perform the tasks essential to peace. We shall not shirk from that role as others take their place beside us. We seek the increased strength of our allies not as a substitute but as a complement to our own efforts.
>
> *Negotiation.* But a sound economy and a strong military commitment are not enough. Nor can they provide stability and confidence by themselves. They must be accompanied by an active and creative diplomacy and a willingness to negotiate. . . . It is through diplomacy that we build for the future.[25]

These Reagan administration watchwords underscore five main US interests throughout the region. Those five interests are discussed below.

Encourage East Asian Economic Development

As President Reagan stated, "Economic freedom is the world's mightiest engine for abundance and social justice."[26] The great successes of regional economic developments noted earlier are the result of the free-market system and Reagan's "realism" policy. Besides the economic success of this system, Japan and, more recently, South Korea and the other rapidly developing East Asian

nations are moving toward what Secretary Shultz calls "the growth of democratic institutional arrangements for economic and political conduct."[27] Or, simply, the more successful a free-market economy, the more democratic its participants; and since democracies promote stability, free-market success is stabilizing.

Foster a Balance of Power through Strength

A strong forward-deployed US force in East Asia maintains a rough equilibrium of influence between major powers. Currently, the USSR (with allies Vietnam and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea—DPRK) threatens this balance through expansion of its military forces in the region, its invasion of Afghanistan, and its support of Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia.

Since the Soviet Union achieved nuclear parity with the United States, neither side has been able to use nuclear coercion against the other for regional influence. To prevent the nuclear balance from shifting (which would let the Soviets believe they *could* use nuclear weapons for regional influence), a strong US conventional presence is essential.[28]

Regionally, a strong US presence puts teeth into US security agreements. For example, US forces in South Korea have been critical factors in preventing another Korean conflict.

Maintain US Access to East Asia

Access is vital for several reasons: politically to maintain stability; economically to foster free trade and access to raw materials; strategically to protect sea-lanes; and militarily to maintain balance of power. Without access to East Asia, the United States would be virtually helpless to influence political and economic growth there.

Encourage Political Stability and Peaceful Change

Having military and diplomatic access to East Asian nations also gives the United States opportunities to assist in domestic troubles through negotiation. Differences in ethnic backgrounds, regional values, and religious roots abound in Asian countries, creating the potential for political instability; and the collapse of a free-developing nation would undermine regional stability. Also, internal strife could result in the denial of US access and upset the regional balance of power. The Marcos-to-Aquino transition in the Philippines illustrates how the United States supported the relatively peaceful change of power from an autocracy to the fledgling beginning of a more democratic government.

Promote Human Rights and Democratic Principles

Secretary Shultz emphasized the importance of this policy in a formal statement.

> The extension of democratic processes and institutions and the respect of human rights in general are integral elements to the achievement of lasting progress and legitimacy. Abuses of human rights undermine the progress, legitimacy, and even the stability of governments, thereby vitiating their gains.[29]

Emphasis on the human rights aspect receives less attention than it did during the Carter administration, however; South Korea and the Philippines have blemished histories on this issue, so the United States must be careful in its approach for reform because these countries are valuable allies. The United States must also be careful with China because the developing relationship is very delicate.

US interests have pretty much remained the same over time. What does change is the emphasis placed on US-East Asian interests by the administration in power. Interests in Asia compete with other global and regional interests and the administration's

emphasis on current issues determines the power behind regional policy.

US Policy Objectives in Southeast Asia

In the decade since Saigon fell into Communist hands, three critical destabilizing situations in Southeast Asia have become of prime concern to the United States: Vietnamese dominance over Indochina, Soviet growth in Vietnam, and serious political and economic problems in the Philippines.

Vietnam

United States policy regarding Vietnam is to peacefully negotiate the Vietnamese out of Cambodia and Laos. To use a simple carrot-and-stick analogy, the carrot is to dangle a view of a new Vietnamese relationship with the rest of the world—access to world markets, importation of new technologies, economic development assistance, and greatly increased diplomatic options. The stick is to continue aid to the Khmer resistance forces opposing Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. The cost of occupying Cambodia and the debilitating effect of a continuing guerrilla war hurt Vietnamese economic development programs. Equally important, the Cambodian war makes Hanoi almost totally dependent upon the USSR.

Politically, US policy concerning Vietnamese dominance over Cambodia and Laos comprises five elements: (1) condemn the Vietnamese government for continuing aggression in Indochina and refuse to negotiate any settlement or aid until Vietnamese troops are removed from Cambodia and all missing US servicemen are accounted for by Hanoi; (2) support the ASEAN countries in their diplomatic efforts to oppose the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia; (3) continue direct support to individual ASEAN countries, especially Thailand as a frontline state; (4) provide humanitarian and medical aid to the non-Communist Khmer

resistance forces; and (5) continue massive support efforts for the flood of refugees fleeing the Vietnamese aggression.[30]

Secretary of State Shultz stated during the July 1984 ASEAN Dialogue that the United States "will do [its] part including moral, political, and humanitarian support for the organizations led by Prince Sihanouk and Son Sann. We will give no support to the Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot, whose atrocities outraged the world." Regarding the ASEAN countries, Secretary Shultz continued, "[We] have offered Vietnam a realistic proposal for a negotiated political solution, one based on the restoration of [Cambodia's] sovereignty and the rights of its people to choose their own government. Such a solution safeguards the interests of the Khmer people and of all [Cambodia's] neighbors."[31]

Regarding aid, the United States has been contributing development assistance, security assistance, and direct humanitarian aid on the order of a half-billion dollars per year to support ASEAN's anti-Vietnamese efforts.[32] The United States is also providing humanitarian aid to the non-Communist Khmer resistance forces in Cambodia. The aid, in the form of medical assistance and food, helps to keep the resistance forces active in opposing the Vietnamese.[33] The United States does not provide military aid directly to the Khmer resistance; it does provide security assistance to Thailand, helping the Thai people defend their border against the 160,000 Vietnamese troops occupying Cambodia.[34] America's support for Thailand is critical not only because of the Vietnamese threat, but also because there is a fear among the other ASEAN states that Bangkok may turn even closer to China if the United States does not live up to its treaty commitments.

Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines have made major contributions to the alleviation of human suffering by providing temporary asylum and processing facilities for refugees. The United States continues to assist in these joint efforts to help the refugees. Of the 1.5 million Indonesian refugees resettled worldwide since 1975, the United States has taken in 650,000; it will continue to keep the door open.[35]

Countering the Soviet Presence

Regardless of the Soviets' reason to be in Vietnam, their presence in a predominantly military capacity creates unavoidable concern for the United States. The chief US interest threatened by the Soviets is the balance of power in Asia. Because the Soviets have not been successful in their quest for political and economic influence, their capability to project military power in Southeast Asia is very important. US policy, designed to maintain a favorable balance of power, includes:

- Maintaining close cooperative relationships with countries in strategic proximity to key sea-lanes of communication.
- Protecting the frontline states (including Thailand).
- Enhancing US treaty relationships.
- Retaining use of military facilities in the Philippines.[36]

American defense actions in East Asia back up US foreign policy objectives. Since 1981 force improvements have been steadily forthcoming. Secretary Richard L. Armitage described some of those improvements in a speech to the National Defense University Pacific Symposium in February 1985.

> Naval forces are receiving new nuclear-powered *Los Angeles*-class submarines, *Perry*-class frigates and *Spruance*-class destroyers. We have introduced a new nuclear-powered carrier, the *Carl Vinson*, and the battleship *New Jersey*, soon to be followed by the *Missouri*. And we have added four *Ohio*-class ballistic missile-equipped submarines to our Pacific-based strategic deterrent forces. Our Marines are receiving new F/A-18 attack aircraft and Army forces are being modernized with new AH-1S Cobra attack helicopters and UH-60 Blackhawk troop-carrying helicopters. Our Pacific Air Forces have increased from 240 to 300 combat aircraft since 1980, with a further increase to come next summer as we add two additional squadrons of F-16s at Misawa Air Base, Japan. More than two-thirds of our Pacific-based aircraft are now modern A-10s, F-15s, and F-16s, compared with only 20 percent in 1980. All forces have benefited from increased and more modern munitions stocks and other sustainability improvements.[37]

The United States Pacific Command (USPACOM) modernization efforts are tangible evidence of US defense policy initiatives. However, with the exception of naval improvements, which benefit the theaterwide Pacific Fleet, US modernization efforts focus on Northeast Asia.

- Fleet Marine Force improvements are for Japan-based forces.
- Improvements in forward-deployed US Army forces are for the 2d Infantry Division in South Korea. (There are no major US Army forces in the Philippines.)
- Fighter aircraft upgrades have been for forces in Japan and Korea.

Although US resolve in the Pacific has been considerably strengthened, there are some shortcomings. The Pacific Air Forces in the Philippines at Clark AB are equipped with essentially the same F-4 weapon systems and associated equipment since 1980; and the F-4 Phantoms lack the range for unrefueled attacks on Cam Ranh Bay.[38] There has been, however, a bolstering of spare parts, fuel reserves, and critical munitions.[39] Adm William J. Crowe, Jr., told the Senate in February 1985 that "modern extended-range fighters such as the F-15E and the F-16, complemented with AWACS [airborne warning and control system] and KC-135 tankers support, are necessary to give PACOM a theaterwide defensive capability. Moreover, these assets provide a desperately needed attack capability for striking enemy bases." The admiral also stated that Pacific Command lacks both land- and sea-based long-range early warning over-the-horizon surveillance capabilities.[40]

Other areas needing emphasis are "air and sealift, reliable communications and the ability to defend individual facilities."[41] The critical lines of supply from the mainland United States stretch westward to the Philippines more than 5,500 nautical miles, twice the distance between the United States and Europe across the Atlantic. Shortages currently exist in US airlift, sealift, and amphibious lift throughout the Pacific; loss of any of the current capability would severely inhibit resupply. Vice Adm Thomas

Kinnebrew disclosed his concern: "If our fire hose should be cut in mid-course we couldn't extinguish the fire."[42] Most of the major sea-lanes lie on northern routes from the United States to Asia. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense James A. Kelly lists Soviet submarines and the Backfire bomber as "most serious direct threat[s] to the United States . . . because of their capability to interdict our lines of communications."[43] If the long-range Backfire threat is not neutralized, and if Soviet submarines prevail across the Pacific, US resupply convoys will be forced southward to the longer routes through the South Pacific used in World War II.

Admiral Crowe is also concerned about command, control, and communications. This critical area "needs constant attention because of advancing technology on both sides. The geographic area of the Pacific, which results in widely dispersed island communication nodes, makes our communications particularly vulnerable."[44]

Clark Air Base and Subic Bay Naval Base will be critical central staging bases for all US operations in Asia. US operations from Northeast Asia through Southeast Asia to Southwest Asia depend on these bases in the Philippines. Their protection against Soviet threats from Cam Ranh Bay is essential. Enhancements in point defense systems are particularly needed.[45]

These shortcomings notwithstanding, USPACOM forces participate in over a hundred combined military exercises per year with allies and friends to demonstrate joint commitment to peace in the region. For US-Pacific allies, these exercises enhance mutual effectiveness and ability to respond. They also help nonallied friendly nations meet their own defense requirements and provide the basis for future interoperability and cooperation with US forces.[46]

These defense relationships contribute significantly to regional stability and the balance of power by helping to deter Soviet aggression. The most effective means of countering the challenge is through a clear demonstration of resolve so that Moscow will recognize what Admiral Crowe calls "the unambiguous

commitment of the United States and its allies to the security of the region."[47]

The Philippines

Regarding US objectives in the Philippines, the United States' concern over Philippine domestic problems has more to do with the Philippine people and the nation itself than with the potential loss of US access to military bases. Those policy objectives were articulated by Assistant Secretary of State Wolfowitz.

> The US policy for progress is clear. It is no different from the policy we urge at home and in other countries abroad. Democratic processes and market mechanisms are often turbulent and lack the superficial appearance of efficiency of highly centralized systems. We are nonetheless convinced that countries are strongest and prosper best when: (a) government is chosen by the people, responsive to the people, and subject to the rule of law; (b) the economy is open to the forces of the market place; and (c) the military is a professional institution subject to the civilian government and respectful of citizens' rights.[48]

These policy objectives were actively pursued through the wake of the Benigno Aquino assassination, the internal struggle for power, and Marcos's exile. Regarding the Philippines, the United States "encourages basic reforms necessary to the survival of their democratic institutions,"[49] according to Assistant Secretary Wolfowitz, who also emphasized the importance of free elections.

> The United States will continue to support free and fair local elections in 1986 and presidential elections in 1987; but on such critical questions as electoral codes and election monitoring, it is the Filipinos themselves who must decide what is necessary.[50]

The Philippine economy continues to be a major problem. Department of Commerce official George Paine cautioned that the "pace of economic development and resultant business opportunities will depend heavily upon whether the Philippine government decides to make short-term sacrifices in order to obtain the long-term benefits of allowing the economy to respond

to market forces."[51] For long-term growth, the Filipinos must eliminate the barriers, such as restrictions on imports, that currently block realization of their full economic potential. Examples of restricted imports are consumer goods, capital equipment, and spare parts.[52]

The United States will continue to strongly support International Monetary Fund (IMF) reforms. Beyond that, assistance will be aimed at encouraging reforms needed to establish a free-market environment as the base for long-term growth. The United States is distributing grants and loans to the Philippines through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and through the PL-480 program. The 1986–87 allocation under this program is $50 million. The United States also supports World Bank efforts to disburse loans that support specific reform targets.[53]

The United States will also provide sorely needed military material assistance. Foreign exchange currency shortages and the lack of resources have gutted the Philippine armed forces' ability to put down the Communist insurgency in Mindinao and to pursue effective counterinsurgency measures against the dangerous New People's Army. US foreign assistance will significantly aid the most basic shortcomings in maintenance, logistics, transportation, communications, and training. In addition to previously negotiated support, the United States is extending an additional $150 million in military and economic aid to the Philippine government, bringing total US aid to that island nation to $500 million in fiscal year 1986.[54]

At the same time, US policy is to make clear to the Filipinos that the Philippine military will not be able to cope with insurgency without basic reforms. Military abuse of civilians, one of the reported reasons for insurgency growth, must cease.[55]

Strategically, there is no question that the use of Philippine bases by the United States is important to both the United States and the Philippines. Any alternative US basing posture in Southeast Asia

would be extremely costly. These Philippine facilities are enormously important because they exert a deterrent effect by helping to preserve the balance of power against the expanded Soviet and Vietnamese presence in the region. They are important not only to the United States and the Philippines but also to the other countries of East and Southeast Asia.

In 1983 the US and Philippine governments concluded a military bases agreement which provides for at least five years of unhampered US basing operations within the context of the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty and the 1947 basing agreement.[56] The DOD does not expect to lose the bases, but planners should be aware of alternatives. Secretary Armitage addressed Congress about this possibility in October 1984.

> Without giving undue public emphasis to "what if" questions, we are looking at this very carefully. One specific item I will mention is the successfully concluded landlease with the Northern Mariana Government for 18,000 acres of Saipan and Tinian. Although this real estate, even with heavy capital investment, would hardly match the facilities at Clark and Subic, it does provide an important fallback basing area for redeployment from [the] Philippines, especially when used in the context with Guam.[57]

During a contingency, the United States could be offered basing access by other Asian states through linked security agreements. The ANZUS treaty binds Australia, New Zealand, and the United States to come to the aid of one another in the event of an attack on the territory of any of the three allies or their forces within the Pacific area.[58] Since New Zealand and Australia are tied by security links to Malaysia and Singapore through the Five Power Defense Arrangement, and to the South Pacific island states by the South Pacific Commission and the South Pacific Forum, there are several potential opportunities for basing rights.

Summary

United States interests in the Pacific have remained essentially the same for two centuries. Some are formalized in security

agreements; other interests grew from economic opportunities. Threatening the security and viability of US interests is the growing Soviet threat, which tends to upset equilibrium in East Asia. In the face of this Soviet presence, the United States continues to foster a balance of power by modernizing its forces and improving their combat readiness throughout the theater, and by encouraging allied support.

In Southeast Asia, the United States deplores the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and is supporting the non-Communist Khmer resistance with humanitarian aid. It is supporting neighboring Thailand with military aid.

The United States supports democratic principles in the Philippines and points out that reforms in government, economy, and military are essential to stability there. US use of Subic Bay and Clark is secure for the moment; long-range future use is somewhat less secure.

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CHAPTER 3

SOVIET INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES IN EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

> Russia is a border state; it is the European frontier with Asia.
>
> S. M. Solovyov
> 19th-Century Russian Historian

In his preface to *Soviet Policy in East Asia*, Donald S. Zagoria reminds us that the Soviets are shareholders in Asia.

> For the Soviet Union, East Asia is second in priority only to Europe. Three-fourths of the Soviet Union lies in Asia; one-third of Asia lies within the USSR; 80 million people, or approximately one-third of the Soviet population, live in Asiatic regions of the USSR; and 50 million Soviet citizens, about 20 percent of the population, are of Asian Nationalities.[1]

The Soviets are definitely players in Asia. For the past several hundred years the Russians were on the receiving end of a long string of invasions and wars. Given the Mongol conquest of the 12th and 13th centuries, the Japanese defeat of the Russian fleet in 1905, Western "intervention against the newly founded Bolshevik state at Arkhangel and Vladivostok in 1919," and the squeeze play by the Germans and the Japanese (again) in World War II, it is no surprise that the Soviets fear another two-front war.[2]

In reaction, the Soviet Union has sought to capture a defensive zone of buffer states. For example, the Eastern European bloc strengthens Soviet defenses on Moscow's western front; and the invasion of Afghanistan was intended as the groundwork for the same advantage in South Asia.

In the east, North Korea is the only contiguous ally. The open sea to the Soviet northeast and the loss of China as a buffer perpetuate fears of two-front vulnerability.[3] Moscow's resolution never to be invaded again gives rise to the Soviet expansionist doctrine, which Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko characterized this way: "No problem in the world can be resolved without Soviet participation."[4]

Such "participation" includes economic development of the rich mineral and energy resources of the Soviet far east. But the priority for Siberian economic growth gave way during the cold war years to security concerns. The Sino-Soviet split combined with US containment policy to refocus the Soviet Union's attention on the second front. Also, the growing United States-Japanese relationship constrained Soviet-Japanese trade and mutual investments.

Soviet behavior in East Asia has been aggressive and overbearing. In fact, the Soviets have reached a level where they have little diplomatic or political influence without using military intimidation.

Soviet Political and Economic Interests in East Asia

Moscow's chief interests in East Asia are to decrease American influence there, encourage Japan and China away from the West, and develop Soviet far east resources and security. Zagoria identifies the Soviet Union's policy objectives in East Asia: counter American influence, isolate and encircle China, maintain Korean status quo, develop Soviet far east resources, and further trade with East Asian countries.[5]

Counter American Influence

The Soviets seek a coalition of allies to counter the American-backed Pacific allies. They have offered Asians opportunities for alignment with the USSR as an alternative to US

assistance. For coming on board, Moscow promises military and economic cultural exchange tied to politico-military commitments.[6]

To entice allies, the Soviets offer themselves as a dual-role model. The Soviet Marxist-Leninist revolutionary model is supposed to inspire the developing nations of Asia; but except for Cambodia, there are no "liberation movements" to support. And in Cambodia, Soviet support is on the side of the oppressor, Vietnam. Further, the Soviet economic role model is geared to painfully slow totalitarian progress; and slow progress has little appeal to pragmatic Asian leaders whose main concerns are economic and domestic.[7]

The Soviet Union also promotes the image of a global nation seeking world status by advocating peace and security in the world. Leonid Brezhnev proposed an Asian collective security group after the Soviet-Chinese border clashes in 1969, but his proposal drew no takers.

The Soviets tried to secure global condemnation of Chinese hegemonism as "an inadmissible policy in international relations" in 1981 but drew only cynical responses. And there was international condemnation of Moscow's invasion of Afghanistan, its support for the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, and its military presence on Japan's Soviet-occupied northern territories.[8]

Moscow has succeeded in gaining access to Middle East oil by securing base rights or port access in Angola, Ethiopia, the Seychelles, South Yemen, and Vietnam. These gains in militarily strategic locales, when added to North Korea, gave the Soviets a link from the Middle East to the Soviet Pacific. But these countries do not comprise a coalition of political allies in the sense that Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand are allied with the United States.[9]

Soviet policy designed to counter the US alliance system by browbeating Asian countries into submission has backfired.

> It is always possible that the USSR may succeed in convincing one or more of the states in the region that its military strength, coupled with the uncertainties surrounding American power and policy, make accommodation to Soviet interests the only sane and logical policy. Up

> to date, however, the trend has been the reverse. The movement is toward alignment against a perceived Soviet threat, albeit with a pronounced Japanese reluctance to accept a confrontational policy. Increased Soviet military power has neither isolated the United States nor reduced its influence. On the contrary, reliance upon the United States has had a higher premium even as self-strengthening takes on new importance.[10]

Isolate and Encircle China

Concerning Soviet fears of a strong China, Zagoria contends that

> Moscow seeks to isolate and encircle China in an effort to keep her weak. Should China become a great power, the Soviets believe Beijing will almost certainly become Moscow's most dangerous adversary. The Soviets do not fear China by itself, at least not in the near future. What they fear is an industrialized China, armed by and increasingly tied to the West and Japan.[11]

John J. Stephan added to the discussion: "No amount of Soviet rhetoric can hide the cost of China's metamorphosis from a subordinate ally into a vociferously hostile antagonist cultivating political, economic, and military ties with Japan, the United States, and Western Europe."[12]

Near-term prospects for a full Sino-Soviet rapprochement are slim. The Soviet campaign for condemning hegemonism was a policy turnaround—the Chinese first used the term to denounce Soviet activities around China. Negotiations with the Chinese have produced some gains in trade, cultural exchanges, and improved state-to-state relations; but before the Chinese agree to any major upgrade in their relations with the USSR, they demand among other things that the Soviet Union withdraw its troops from Mongolia, reduce its military deployments along the Sino-Soviet frontier, cease military assistance to Vietnam, and pull out of Afghanistan.[13]

In the face of threatening political rhetoric, the Chinese went ahead and bridged economic and state relations with Japan in 1978—first by signing a trade agreement and later by signing a treaty of peace and friendship. With access to Chinese resources,

the Japanese view Siberian opportunities as less appealing. Also to the Soviets' consternation, the PRC will gain substantial Japanese capital and current technology to build its economy and—more fearful—modernize its armed forces.

Despite continuing efforts to disrupt China-US relations, Moscow restrains itself from driving a diplomatic wedge between the two over the Taiwan issue; if the PRC resumed sovereignty over Taiwan, the strategic result would be an even more powerful China.[14] Failing diplomatically, Moscow uses its remaining instrument of power—military might. Soviet far east forces opposite China and Japan number over 550,000 frontline troops; and there are additional rear reserves, all supplied with modern weapons—both conventional and nuclear. These forces comprise about 53 divisions.[15] Moscow also threatens China from the south through its ally Vietnam and with its own forces at Cam Ranh Bay.

Discourage Japanese Military Improvement

Zagoria notes that since "Japan has overtaken the Soviet Union economically, the Soviets are determined to discourage Japan from becoming a strong military power. They are anxious to cut Japanese-American ties and obstruct the further growth of Japanese-Chinese relations."[16]

The Soviets constantly exert political pressure on Japan. They try to keep the Japanese from developing military power and participating in military exercises with the United States. They also criticize US presence in Japan and Japanese-PRC trade. Such bullying is intended to force Japan to cooperate more with the USSR.[17]

According to Deputy Secretary of State William A. Brown, Japan has remained unimpressed by a Soviet offer

> not to redeploy Soviet SS-20 missiles from Europe to the Far East. The real issue . . . remains the existing and ongoing SS-20 deployments in Asia, which the Soviets have not offered to reduce in any way and which they would be free to continue under current INF [intermediate-range nuclear force] proposals.[18]

Any discussion of Soviet efforts to undermine Japanese military growth is not complete without pointing out that the buildup of forces on Soviet-occupied northern island territories claimed by Japan does little to convince Japan it should not rearm.

Maintain Korean Status Quo

Kim Il Sung doesn't trust the Soviets. He is also determined to remain independent of both the Soviets and the Chinese. He keeps North Korea as a completely closed society with chief emphasis (up to 30 percent of GNP) on defense. The fourth largest armed force in the world is under the command of a volatile leader.[19]

As mentioned earlier, Moscow is not willing to experiment with the result of a renewed Korean conflict. There is much potential for confrontation with the Americans if the Soviets get too chummy with Kim; and if the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) were to win, there is no guarantee that Kim Il Sung would be accommodating to Moscow. To lose would show the world a Soviet ally has lost face, which would not be in Moscow's interest. For the time being, Moscow thinks it better to accept the status quo and see if the younger Kim proves more predictable (although indications are otherwise).

Develop Soviet Far East Resources

The most discussed potential Siberian resource is oil. Soviet oil production fell in 1984 for the first time since World War II. This poses a problem because the already sagging Soviet economy derives 60 percent of its income from oil exports.[20] When the oil flow slackens, so does incoming capital. And reduced capital retards domestic development of other Siberian resources.[21]

There are also significant deposits of minerals, coal, and timber in Siberia, but an intemperate climate makes their development difficult. Most of Siberia's people live in the east while most of its resources are in the western region. Further, there is little infrastructure in Siberia, even with the new Baikal-Amur Mainline

(BAM) railroad. Finally, Siberia's agricultural base is very small; it suffers from too short a growing season, insufficient rainfall, and deficient soil.[22]

Western capital is sought to assist in developing Siberia's resources, but Western developers are hesitant. Any move that makes the Soviet far east stronger tends to threaten stability in East Asia. The Chinese feel threatened by encirclement, the Japanese are skeptical about any dealings with the Soviets, and the Americans are not anxious to see a stronger USSR in Asia.[23]

The Soviets have been mostly unsuccessful in enticing development from its most likely partner, Japan. It appears that Moscow has an inflated opinion of the value of Siberian resources to the Japanese. A leading Soviet economist in *Foreign Trade* reveals the Soviets' lack of tact:

> Those circles within Japan and outside of it which for various reasons have prevented Japanese companies from cooperating on a compensation basis with Soviet organizations in carrying out these projects have damaged Japan's national interests, particularly in the context of the worsening energy, raw materials and general economic crisis in the capitalist world.[24]

Any deal the Soviets strike with the West for oil exploration or production will probably be heavily stacked for primary benefit to the Soviet far east. The most likely Siberian resources to be offered for Western development are minerals, coal, and lumber; but for the time being, these will chiefly go to already established trading partners in Western Europe.[25]

Further Trade with East Asian Countries

The Soviet record of success in trade is little better than in the political arena.[26] The Soviets have been remarkably unsuccessful in penetrating Asia economically. Only 7 percent of their exports go to Asia, and the region accounts for only 12 percent of the USSR's imports.[27]

Soviet trading relationships have generally declined since 1960. Trade is meager but improving with Japan, drastically reduced

with China (as compared to the fifties). The Soviets have coerced Vietnam into being inescapably obliged to them for trade, credits, and military and economic aid; and they would like the same degree of dependency from North Korea.[28]

In the case of Japanese-Soviet trade, difficulties arise between capitalist and Communist ways of doing business. Japanese businessmen don't like the Soviets' "long, capricious and arbitrary" ways of negotiation.[29] The Soviets complain that the Japanese market fluctuates too much, seemingly unaware that these aberrations are driven by world market changes.[30]

Until 1978 Japan, the Soviet Union's largest trading partner in Asia, accounted for more than half the USSR's total trade in the region. The Soviet Union was Japan's tenth largest trading partner. But rankings don't really tell the story: In the peak trading period of the mid-1970s, the Soviets purchased only about 3.5 percent of the goods exported by Japan and produced less than 2 percent of the goods imported by Japan. And Soviet-Japanese trade and economic negotiations have since slowed, primarily because of the deterioration of political relations.[31] Moscow doesn't seem to understand that the negative political climate it has with Tokyo undermines the very confidence necessary for economic cooperation.[32]

Regarding Soviet-Chinese trade, things were going great until the Sino-Soviet split.

> In the 1950s, Soviet economic assistance to China involved one of the largest technology transfers in history. From 1950 to 1959, the Soviets delivered $1.35 billion worth of equipment and completed 130 projects, including factories for trucks, machine tools, and generating equipment. In addition, the Soviets provided massive technical aid in the form of blueprints and technical information, some 10,000 Soviet technicians and advisors, and training for 15,000 Chinese in the USSR. Soviet financial aid helped, although only $430 million of the $1.4 billion in Soviet loans was specifically for economic development. More important for [Beijing] was the USSR's . . . willingness to accept large amounts of China's raw materials and consumer goods in payment for Chinese imports.[33]

Soviet assistance was sharply terminated by Nikita Khrushchev when China split away from the Soviet Union in 1960. Many

projects were abandoned, the Chinese were enraged, and economic relations were seriously damaged. Trade was resumed in 1967, but hit another low point in 1969 after border clashes. By 1970 Sino-Soviet trade was less than 3 percent of what it had been in the 1950s.[34] The USSR and China reached a new trade agreement in November 1970, and the upturn has been steady; still, trade with the Soviet Union accounted for only 4 percent of Chinese trade in 1986.[35]

The USSR-North Korean economic situation has been unique. Even though Kim Il Sung was installed by the Soviets as the leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, he apparently feels no allegiance to the Soviets. He has played China off against the Soviet Union, and vice versa, when it politically suited him. Kim also seeks advantages in economic dealings but has not been very successful.

Kim took a big gamble in 1972 when he imported a lot of manufacturing machinery from Western Europe and Japan on credit. But his new industry was not able to export enough goods to pay for the equipment; and things got worse when OPEC raised oil prices. When the world economy recessed in 1975, driving metal prices down, Kim couldn't pay his bills. The North Koreans owed the Soviets $700 million and Moscow was unwilling to extend any further credit. They did decrease DPRK's interest payments and postpone principal payments. After that, Soviet-North Korean trade has remained on a cash-only basis.[36]

One 1984 event may have laid the groundwork for enhanced USSR-DPRK trade: Kim Il Sung visited Moscow for the first time in 23 years. Resulting trade benefits remain to be seen, however.

Vietnam's trade potential with the USSR is a minor issue compared with the strategic benefits of basing access. In the late 1970s Vietnam was largely unable to resolve its substantial domestic economic problems. The Soviets were standing close by when Hanoi failed to attract Western capital and China severed its $300-million-per-year aid program. Vietnam became a full member of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) and signed a 25-year Soviet-Vietnamese treaty of friendship and cooperation in November 1978. The Soviet Union acquired a

strategic ally; and Moscow can use Vietnam's formal CMEA membership to appeal to other members to pick up part of the tab for Vietnam's subsidy. The Vietnamese benefit because CMEA members have resumed development of projects dropped by the Chinese. Hanoi also expects Eastern European countries to continue providing a market for its exports.[37]

The Vietnamese, however, have yet to produce significant exports. Just the reverse, in fact: former Assistant Secretary of State Evelyn Colbert testified to Congress that "in 1981, according to an official Vietnamese report, Soviet aid provided 90 percent of Vietnamese food imports, almost 70 percent of its fertilizer, nearly 90 percent of its cotton and 80 percent of its metals."[38]

Since 1978 the Soviets have been pouring up to $1 billion per year into Vietnam. According to Colbert, most of this Soviet aid "is in the form of soft loans or in concessional prices rather than grants. Vietnam, having little export in turn, is now heavily in debt to the USSR."[39]

On the other hand, Vietnam's hopes for European developmental assistance have begun to be realized. "The USSR and the Eastern European countries have funded and provided technicians for electric power plants, irrigation systems, highway and railway maintenance and industrial plants of various kinds."[40] In 1981 Moscow and Hanoi renegotiated a developmental assistance agreement under which the USSR would provide aid for 40 new energy and transportation projects and support the completion of 60 ongoing projects. In return, Vietnam was obligated to export more food and raw materials to the USSR.[41]

To work off a portion of its debts and in return for Soviet aid, Vietnam signed labor cooperation agreements with the USSR and Eastern European countries under which 15,000 Vietnamese laborers will work in those countries. Their wages are adjusted to pay part of the national debt. The potential is great for significantly increased numbers of them to work in Eastern Europe into the 1990s. But the Soviets continue to maintain strong control of Vietnam's economic potential by skimming off a considerable portion of the available work force.[42]

Vietnam also offers the Soviets petroleum possibilities; and Moscow was quick to gain options on potentially rich offshore oil rights through a July 1980 agreement that provides for extraction of gas and oil.[43] The Soviets now have the rights to all offshore oil from Hanoi to the Southern Vietnamese delta although actual production has not been verified.[44]

Soviet Policy Objectives in Southeast Asia

The main Soviet dividend from their investment in Vietnam is strategic position. The Soviets bought their way into a position of easy access to vital trade routes between the Persian Gulf and Northeast Asia. They can also threaten China from the south.

The day-to-day relationship between the Soviets and the Vietnamese is fraught with problems. The nationalistic Vietnamese, xenophobic for centuries, barely tolerate the Soviets. They don't like the overbearing Soviets controlling their economy or trying to exert influence on Cambodia and Laos; the Soviets don't like the way the Vietnamese use their aid. Soviet policy objectives in Southeast Asia are to enhance ties with Communist Indochina, increase Soviet influence in ASEAN, and preserve Soviet access through Southeast Asian SLOCs.

Enhance Ties with Communist Indochina

Besides providing strategic access, Vietnamese regional actions in the seventies were accommodating to Soviet interests. Vietnam expelled the United States from Indochina, replaced a pro-Chinese regime in Cambodia with one that accommodates Moscow, and repelled the Chinese invasion without direct USSR involvement. Further, Hanoi is "guiding Laos into the socialist community."[45]

It is in the interest of the USSR to solidify its ties with Communist Indochina. In addition to economic assistance, the Soviets continue to provide Vietnam a considerable inventory of military equipment. Secretary Colbert briefly traces the initial influx of Soviet weaponry.

> Large-scale Soviet military assistance began even before the Kampuchean [Cambodian] invasion, in August 1978, amidst heightened Vietnamese tensions with both Phnom Penh and Beijing, and increasing Chinese military assistance to Kampuchea [Cambodia]. Soviet airlift began to deliver very large quantities of arms to Vietnam. . . . In 1979, Soviet arms deliveries increased tenfold over 1978; thereafter, the amount although declining remained substantial with total costs since early 1979 estimated at about $2.5 billion. Soviet advisors provide assistance to the Vietnamese, and Soviet aircraft ferry men and arms within Vietnam and from Vietnam to Kampuchea [Cambodia] and Laos. The Soviets have provided Vietnam with armored vehicles, artillery pieces, antiaircraft guns, surface-to-air missile launchers, late-model MiG-21 interceptors, ground attack fighters, cargo, assault, and ASW helicopters, patrol boats (some missile-armed), tank-landing ships, and minesweepers. The USSR has also provided Vietnam with radar and other monitoring facilities.[46]

A strengthened Vietnam demands that China also pay attention to its southern border, thereby helping the USSR's encirclement policy. Access to Vietnam also affords the Soviets strengthened air and intelligence capabilities against the PRC.[47]

Characterizing the Soviet-Vietnamese affiliation, Colbert said, "No such relationship could be friction free. . . . Alliances tend to survive both the weaker party's resentment of its dependence and the stronger party's resentment of its burden when acceptable substitutes are lacking."[48] And the Vietnamese are definitely resentful, finding Soviets "generally contemptible," according to Douglas Pike; the Vietnamese regard the Soviets as "racist, insensitive to things Vietnamese, and largely incapable of approaching the subtle characteristics of the Vietnamese mind."[49] On the other hand, Pike observes, the Soviets describe the Vietnamese as "very demanding of material goods and unappreciative of the assistance provided at considerable sacrifice by the Soviet people."[50]

Zagoria and Sheldon W. Simon note the central differences between the Soviet Union and Vietnam: Soviet global versus Vietnamese regional focus; quality and quantity of Soviet economic aid; Vietnamese economic planning; and control over Laos and Cambodia.[51]

The Soviets take a global view of how Vietnam fits strategically in the context of the United States and China. An unchecked

Vietnam could escalate the Cambodian occupation or pick a fight with Thailand, either of which would shift ASEAN closer to the United States or even China. If USSR-PRC relations were to improve, Vietnam could again become an expendable pawn in great power alignments. The Vietnamese are resentfully aware of their dependent position, but their chief interest is regional—corralling Indochina.[52]

In 1981 the Soviets and the Vietnamese began bickering over the amount of aid the Soviets were to put into the third Vietnamese five-year plan (1981–85); it amounted to 40 percent less than the previous plan. Terms for the aid also came under debate when the Soviets raised the price of subsidized oil, causing a further imbalance for Vietnam and forcing it to export more of its scarce agricultural products.[53]

Moscow also resents Hanoi's management of its economy. In June 1980 a Soviet delegation to Hanoi concluded the Vietnamese "did not have the proper management capability to absorb advanced Soviet equipment in their economy which caused the Soviets to cut off aid to the third five year plan."[54]

Besides Vietnam, the Soviets have interests in Cambodia and Laos. Through Vietnam, Moscow provides some aid to Cambodia; but the larger investment is in Laos, where direct Soviet economic assistance amounted to $85 million between 1979 and 1983. Laos is also a party to a 1982 trade agreement with Vietnam and the USSR.[55]

The Soviets also use strategically located Laos as a base for a satellite communication station. In addition, the Soviets maintain over 1,000 technicians on Laotian soil, including a training cadre for the Laotian air force.[56]

There is a smaller Soviet military advisory presence in Cambodia, where the Soviets are helping to improve the commercial port facilities at Kompong Som. Soviet naval and merchant vessels visit this western Cambodian port, and Soviet dock workers are stationed there. There are reports in the Asian press that the Soviets are building a naval base in Cambodia, but Colbert says these reports "seem to be without foundation."[57]

Moscow would like to exploit strategic opportunities in Laos and Cambodia, but Vietnam allows little opportunity for direct Soviet dealings. Hanoi-installed Laotian strongman Kaysone Phomvihane ensures Vietnamese control of Laotian affairs. Kaysone, of Vietnamese descent, is a former Ho Chi Minh secretary and North Vietnamese battalion commander. His government is backed up by 40,000 Vietnamese troops stationed in Laos.[58]

In 1982 Vietnam's leaders purged Pen Sovan's pro-Soviet faction from the Cambodian Communist party. It is therefore clear that Hanoi's Vietnamese advisers have absolute control over even the lowest levels of Cambodian government.[59] In addition, Vietnam still maintains some 160,000 occupation troops in Cambodia.[60] History stands as an argument against good permanent Soviet-Vietnamese relations.

> In 2000 years, Vietnam has never had permanent relations with anyone—not China, not 15th century Burma, not 19th century Thailand, not the Chams, not the Montagnards, not the French, and not the Americans. There were moments of amicability and harmonious relations in each case, but each disintegrated in the end.[61]

Increase Soviet Influence in ASEAN

Besides interests in Indochina, Moscow seeks to gain legitimate acceptance by ASEAN and at the same time prevent ASEAN from strengthening ties with China, the United States, and the industrialized free world.[62] But the Soviets face ASEAN's collective distrust; they have great difficulty making economic inroads into ASEAN's free-market economies and in making diplomatic progress with anti-Communist ASEAN governments.

Through 1982 the ASEAN nations had not felt directly threatened by the distant power of the Soviet Union. And with the Americans nearby (in support of the Guam doctrine) to balance their strategic presence, the Soviets are welcome today as long as they don't provoke any unrest or cause an economic disruption of the status quo.[63]

ASEAN nations *are* affected by both Soviet support of Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia and the degree that the USSR and Vietnam draw Chinese attention away from ASEAN. The ASEAN nations are split over how to deal with Vietnam. Indonesia and Malaysia prefer to leave Vietnam as the predominant power in Cambodia because a Vietnamese-ruled Indochina would be a formidable buffer protecting Indonesia and Malaysia from China; and with reduced pressure from China, Vietnam would depend less on the USSR.[64]

On the other hand, Thailand, strongly supported by Singapore, demands a complete Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia. Rivaled by Vietnam for a thousand years, Thailand feels directly threatened by the 1979 loss of Cambodia as a buffer to Vietnamese aggression. With Vietnamese troops poised on its eastern border, Thailand drew closer to China.[65]

Closer ties with China are anything but appealing to Malaysia and Indonesia. Both countries, with populous nonassimilated Chinese minorities, have vivid histories of Beijing-supported insurgency. They are more fearful of China than any threat from the Soviets or the Vietnamese.[66]

Diplomatically, the Soviets are seen in Southeast Asian matters as domineering, oppressive, and bungling. Soviet diplomacy is characterized by clumsy threats, such as that of Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Kapitsa. During his April 1983 ASEAN tour he told officials that Hanoi would retaliate with arms shipments to local insurgents if his ASEAN hosts did not stop supporting Democratic Kampuchea (Cambodian Communist Resistance).[67]

Another discordant Soviet diplomatic overture is Moscow's periodic claim that the earlier Brezhnev Southeast Asian collective alliance proposal is "in accord" with the ASEAN-proposed Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN).[68] How ZOPFAN is enhanced by the offensive nature of a growing Soviet fleet operating from Vietnamese bases is a question Moscow ignores.

The Soviets must overcome a great deal of suspicion if their relations with ASEAN are to be improved. In 1982 Moscow suffered considerable embarrassment over the ouster of several spies from ASEAN countries: Singapore expelled two Soviet

diplomats in February and Indonesia literally kicked out two Soviet attachés that same month. (There was a brawl at the Jakarta airport when the two attachés were packed off.)[69] Also in 1982 the principal aide to the new prime minister of Malaysia was arrested for complicity in espionage and two Soviet KGB agents were expelled for spying.[70] And in May 1983 Thailand expelled a Soviet trade official for espionage.[71]

The Soviets have made little impact on the free market of ASEAN nations. American and Japanese trade volume with ASEAN countries remains many times that of the Soviets. From 1973 to 1981, the Soviet share of ASEAN exports averaged 1.5 percent; three years later, it was only up to 1.6 percent. In 1984 Japan purchased 31 percent of ASEAN exports, the United States more than 22 percent.[72]

> For several reasons Soviet trade is generally treated as either irrelevant or unattractive by ASEAN government officials. . . . The quality of Soviet manufactured goods is generally low, and service arrangements are virtually nonexistent. Because the Soviets do not permit rubles to be converted into other currency, trade is conducted by barter—a tedious process frequently leading to ill will. Added to these obstacles are Moscow's continued refusal to provide preferential access to Communist bloc markets for third world products.[73]

The Soviets have had some success in arranging shipping agreements with Thailand and Singapore. The Soviets derive profits from both shipping and ship repairs. Of note, these joint shipping lines do not participate in the regulatory sanctions of the Far East Freight Conference; and according to Zagoria and Simon, they "have significantly undercut Conference freight rates. The lines' operations also provide an institutional framework for the expansion of Soviet shipping in Southeast Asia."[74] Soviet ship dockings in Thailand and Singapore have increased significantly since 1972.[75]

Besides Soviet interests in ASEAN collective grouping, Moscow has relations with each ASEAN country. Thailand was coerced into diplomatic relations with the USSR when Moscow threatened to veto Thailand's entry into the United Nations after World War II.[76] Since then, Thai-Soviet relations have been cool.

But Thailand has become Moscow's diplomatic/intelligence hub in Southeast Asia. The Soviet embassy staff there is substantially larger than required to conduct affairs of state with Thailand.[77] The Thai were suspicious of the Soviets even before Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, which caused Thailand to be the frontline state.[78] Things are even worse now. The Soviets are unhappy with the Thai for both their condemnation of the Vietnamese invasion and their military cooperation with the United States, including accepting US military aid and participating in joint exercises with US forces.[79] But the Soviets won't "openly condemn [Thailand's] anti-Vietnam and pro-China" politics because they could lose their diplomatic communications base there.[80]

The Malaysians are accommodating to Soviet involvement in Indochinese affairs because they fear the Chinese more than the Soviets. As of 1983 the Soviet spy scandal of the previous year had blown over and Malaysia had grown to be the leading ASEAN trading partner with the Soviets.[81] Overseeing such progress is a large Soviet diplomatic and commercial entourage that is kept under close scrutiny by Malaysia's "special (counterintelligence) branch."[82]

Of the ASEAN nations, Singapore tends to be the most critical of the USSR. This tiny country rebuked Soviet support of Vietnam's Cambodian occupation and threatened to align with China (in support of Thailand). When Vietnam's 1980 offensive spilled over into Thailand, Singapore was quick to scold the Soviets, accusing them of violating their April 1979 guarantee that Vietnamese forces would not violate Thai territory. Singapore also reduced Soviet merchant vessel repairs as a penalty for Moscow's support of Vietnam.[83]

The politically unstable, economically troubled Philippines would seem to be the perfect place for the Soviets to stir up trouble, but there is little Soviet-sponsored revolutionary activity other than channeling arms through Libya to Muslim separatist elements on Luzon and Mindanao.[84]

The Soviets have had diplomatic relations with the Filipinos since 1976 and have tried to expand their economic ties there. Soviet-Philippine trade increased from $300,000 in 1975 to over

$22 million in 1980 but experienced a downturn in the mid-1980s.[85]

In 1982 a major Soviet-sponsored cement plant project stalled out. Moscow proposed a $250-million cement plant on the island of Semirara, some 200 miles south of Subic Bay Naval Base, but the project has been delayed indefinitely because the large numbers of "Soviet technicians and advisors" pose a security threat.[86]

Historically, the Soviets have had the most significant ties with Indonesia. In the early sixties Indonesia received over a billion dollars in security assistance from the Soviets and an additional $600 million in economic assistance from the Eastern European bloc.[87] But in September 1965 a failed Communist coup resulted in severed ties with all Communist states and the investment was lost.[88]

Since 1966 Jakarta has remained cautious over renewing stronger Soviet ties. In 1984 the Soviet press increased propaganda during visits by the Indonesian ministers of defense and economics but those visits failed to open relations beyond a modest level.[89]

Preserve Soviet Access through Southeast Asian Sea-Lanes of Communication

Cam Ranh Bay is central to Soviet objectives throughout Asia. The USSR is chiefly dependent on sealift to develop Siberia, maintain the economy of the Soviet far east, and resupply the Soviet Pacific Fleet.

It is cheaper to move fuel, food, and commodities by sea than by rail across the Soviet Union; and the two Soviet railroads linking east to west, minimally adequate at best, are subject to weather extremes. In addition, Soviet rail transportation would be vulnerable to attack if hostilities were to break out with China. Paul F. Langer reasons that the Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM) railroad was situated more northerly than the existing line to reduce the possibility of Chinese interdiction.[90] The Soviet-Chinese rail link to Vietnam was closed by the Chinese in the spring of 1979,[91] placing even more responsibility on Soviet merchant shipping to deliver the bulk of Soviet and East European goods to Hanoi.

The Arctic sea-lane north of the USSR is also not the best option; according to Langer, it remains time consuming, very costly, and unreliable.[92] Langer also analyzed Soviet military maritime logistics:

> These internal logistical [rail] difficulties are compounded when massive military power projection into Asian areas away from the Sino-Soviet frontier is concerned. In the first place, any larger Soviet military operation in land areas beyond China (such as in Indochina) would have to be conducted by skirting China. But Soviet port capacity in Siberia remains inadequate for such purposes. Severe weather conditions prevail much of the year around the two principal bases [Petropavlovsk and Vladivostok] for which Soviet naval forces will have to rely during the 1980s.[93]

Supply of the far east by air would be a prohibitively expensive option. Soviet military airlift aircraft based in the Lake Baikal area and along the far east border have demonstrated their long distance capabilities in military operations,[94] but their use would not be practical for sustaining the economy.

The Soviet far east remains critically dependent upon sealift, with the Southeast Asian sea-lanes of communication figuring prominently. One of Moscow's chief objectives in East Asia is to ensure that Soviet shipping continues to flow unimpeded through the Strait of Malacca and other shipping lanes of Southeast Asia.

Summary

Soviet interests in the region have not translated well into Asian political and economic matters. The Soviets have had negligible diplomatic success in diminishing the influence of either China or the United States.

Economically, Soviet-East Asian trade remains in small percentages. Potential exists for developing Siberian resources, but the USSR lacks infrastructure and technology. Trade is mainly in various forms of security assistance or in concessions for supporting development of Vietnamese and North Korean industry.

Soviet-Vietnamese relations lack geniality; but they continue, centered on Soviet strategic goals and Vietnamese economic dependency. In Laos and Cambodia, Moscow's desire to expand ties is checked by its ally, Vietnam, which controls Communist surrogate regimes in those countries.

The Soviets would like to see ASEAN pay less attention to China and the United States, more to Moscow. But the ASEAN nations prefer that the Soviets maintain their distance. They do not see the Soviet military threat as being aimed at them, but they don't like the way the Soviets support and sustain the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. They see the Soviet threat as a problem for the Americans to handle. Most ASEAN countries enjoy a politically stable and economically dynamic period; and most have little to do with the USSR.

Sealift is critical to maintaining the vitality of the Soviet far east. Therefore, access to Cam Ranh Bay realizes a chief Soviet objective—a warm port to guard Soviet shipping throughout Southeast Asia.

The Soviet Union's most significant accomplishment is the strategic Southeast Asia access gained through supplying aid to Vietnam. The Soviets' military presence, which centers in Cam Ranh Bay, is the primary source of their influence in Southeast Asia.

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CHAPTER 4

THE PROJECTION OF SOVIET MILITARY POWER IN VIETNAM

The presence of Soviet military forces in Vietnam since 1979 continues to draw international attention. It contributes to Moscow's quest for global military status and strengthens Soviet competitive standing vis-à-vis the United States in the Western Pacific, especially in conjunction with the growth of the Soviet Pacific Fleet and the development of Backfire bombers and SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles in the Soviet far east.

How did the Soviet forces get there? What types of forces are they and where are they located? What about capabilities? This chapter analyzes the chronology and characteristics of the Soviet buildup and capabilities at Cam Ranh Bay (fig. 1).

Soviet Growth at Cam Ranh Bay

> The southern Annamese coast is lined with protected natural bays, among them, Cam Ranh Bay, in the Nha Trang area, which is one of the finest natural harbors in Asia. In 1905 the Russian fleet anchored in this port on the eve of its defeat by the Japanese in the first great modern victory of an Asian country over a European power.[1]

The next time Soviet naval combatant vessels dropped anchor in Cam Ranh Bay was after the brief Sino-Vietnamese war in February and March of 1979. At the height of this conflict, a Soviet task force of 12–15 vessels was patrolling off the South China Coast.[2] The Soviets were believed to be relaying intercepted communications to Hanoi.[3] The Soviets also warned Beijing that if China did not halt its invasion of Vietnam, Moscow "would

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Source: *Jane's Defence Weekly* 2, no. 2, 21 July 1984, 66.

Figure 1. Cam Ranh Bay.

honor its treaty obligations to the Vietnamese."[4] Whether prompted by the Soviet presence or not, the Chinese forces withdrew from Vietnam in March. On the 27th of that month, the Soviet vessels from the task force steamed into Cam Ranh Bay.[5] A military analyst speculated the reason for the visit was to "take fresh water, fix a few things and generally give a signal to China that 'we are here.'"[6] The official Soviet reason for the visit was that it "is a duty of the Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty."[7]

In April 1979 the Soviets deployed two long-range Tu-95 (Bear D) reconnaissance aircraft to the airfield at Da Nang, about 160 kilometers north of Cam Ranh Bay. During their two-week stay the Bears "flew missions over Cambodia, the Gulf of Thailand and the South China Sea."[8] On 16 May another pair of Bears landed at Da Nang.[9] In January 1980 the Soviets flew in two more Tu-95 Bear Ds and two Tu-142 Bear Fs.[10] The Da Nang operation was apparently a temporary accommodation for the Soviets. Reports from various open sources, including the *Washington Post* and *Asian Defence Journal*, indicate that the entire Bear operation moved from Da Nang to Cam Ranh Bay in the summer of 1980.[11]

Sources differ on details of the buildup of Soviet Bear aircraft; but from the spring of 1979 to the present, the numbers of aircraft have increased.[12] In 1985 the Bear contingent at Cam Ranh Bay comprised eight aircraft, including both reconnaissance and ASW versions.[13] The Bears conduct maritime surveillance missions "up to the Bashi channel between Taiwan and the Philippines and down to the Natuna islands between Malaysia and Borneo" (fig. 2).[14]

The Soviet naval presence increased substantially after 1979. At the end of that year, seven Soviet ships were observed in port.[15] The number of ships rose to 10–15 between 1980 and 1982, 22 in 1983.[16] In October 1984 Adm William J. Crowe, Jr., told the US Information Agency that he estimated an average of 21–28 ships are supported by Cam Ranh, including "somewhere in the neighborhood of 6–10 surface combatant ships, 5–6 submarines, and 10–12 naval associated support ships."[17] The latter category includes an oiler, a submarine tender, a repair ship, a signals intelligence ship, and a buoy tender.[18]

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Source: *Soviet Military Power 1985*, 130.

Figure 2. Soviet Bear Operating Area from Cam Ranh Airfield.

The deployments of these ships to Vietnam represent a proportionate growth in the increasing Soviet Pacific Fleet (SOVPACFLT) rather than a relocation of assets. Between 1978 and 1983 the Pacific Fleet, largest of the four Soviet fleets, grew substantially. Major surface combatants increased from 64 to 84 and nuclear submarines rose from 41 to 69.[19] In April 1985 the Soviet Pacific Fleet included 2 aircraft carriers, 85 principal surface combatants, 114 other combatant ships, and 134 submarines.[20] Also in 1985 the DOD reported that SOVPACFLT commanded 500 aircraft and one naval infantry division.[21]

In 1983 Adm R. L. J. Long, commander of US Pacific Command, told Congress one of the most revealing trends in the development of this blue-water force is the increased number of Soviet Pacific Fleet ships deployed throughout the Pacific. From 1965 to 1978 ship days increased sevenfold, 920 to 6,920 days, and in the past five years have almost doubled again (to 12,800).[22]

Soviet naval growth in Southeast Asia is also reflected in the number of ships reported passing through the Strait of Malacca. Seven Soviet submarines and 48 surface vessels were sighted in 1982; the total for 1983 was 60—a 10-percent increase.[23] A total of 60 Soviet ships in the region was confirmed in 1983 by Gen Jerome F. O'Malley, then commander of Pacific Air Forces, who observed their deployment pattern as "half in the Indian Ocean and half in the South China Sea."[24] By 1985 the rapid Soviet growth had somewhat stabilized to an average of 20 ships on continuous deployment to the Indian Ocean and about 25 operating out of Cam Ranh Bay.[25]

The Soviet Pacific Fleet has also improved in quality. Offensive and defensive capabilities of virtually all Soviet surface combatants and submarines have been upgraded. *Soviet Military Power* (available annually since September 1981) provides a growth study of Soviet surface combatants and submarines and their capabilities.[26] The trend has been toward standoff offensive antiship capabilities, missile defense systems, and improved antisubmarine warfare capability. Deployments of the aircraft carriers *Minsk* and *Novorossiysk* and amphibious assault ships of the *Ivan Rogov* class are significant in that their presence greatly enhances the amphibious and ASW capabilities of the Soviet Pacific Fleet.

The *Minsk* and *Novorossiysk* offer improved capabilities for antisubmarine warfare. They are both aircraft carriers, but they carry Forger vertical and/or short takeoff and landing (VSTOL) aircraft and Ka-25 Hormone ASW helicopters. The *Minsk*, assigned to the Soviet Pacific Fleet since 1979, made an extended deployment to the Indian Ocean on its second cruise to the South China Sea, stopping each time in Cam Ranh Bay.[27] The *Novorossiysk* has been deployed in the Soviet far east since February 1984.[28]

Another significant maritime modernization was the addition of the *Ivan Rogov* assault transport dock (LPD) in 1979.[29] The *Minsk* and the *Ivan Rogov* participated in a joint combined amphibious assault exercise with the Vietnamese in April 1984. The assault involved landing up to 1,000 Soviet naval infantrymen (marines) and an undetermined number of Vietnamese on a beach about 160 kilometers south of Hanoi.[30]

In addition to the increase in long-range reconnaissance and antisubmarine warfare capability generated by the Bear deployment and the building up of Soviet blue-water capabilities in Southeast Asia, the Soviets added a medium-range strike capability to Cam Ranh Bay in November 1983—a squadron of nine Tu-16 Badger bombers.[31] Rear Adm John L. Butts, chief of US Naval Intelligence, said it was "the first deployment of strike aircraft outside the Warsaw Pact since 1972."[32] Between November 1983 and late 1984, the Badger unit consisted of 10 aircraft, including strike, tanker, and electronic combat variants.[33] They have since added six more aircraft, bringing the number of strike aircraft to 10.[34] The Badgers extend Soviet strike capability to all the ASEAN nations, to Guam, and to the western limits of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.[35] In January 1984 five of the Badgers were G models.[36] These aircraft can carry AS-2 Kipper, AS-5 Kelt, and AS-6 Kingfish antisurface/antiship missiles.[37] The Japanese Self-Defense Agency (JSDA) is also reported to have identified four of the Badgers as D models—maritime reconnaissance/electronic intelligence (ELINT) aircraft. The others are tankers that provide wing-to-wing air refueling to Cam Ranh Bay Badgers (fig. 3).[38]

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Source: *Soviet Military Power 1985*, 130.

Figure 3. Soviet Tu-16/Badger Combat Radius from Cam Ranh Airfield.

In December 1984 the Soviets deployed a squadron of MiG-23 Flogger all-weather fighter-interceptor aircraft, "an important upgrade in the air defense of Cam Ranh Bay."[39] These Floggers have been reported by the DOD as operational in both air defense and strike escort roles for Soviet Badgers.[40] Until their arrival, air defense interceptor responsibility for Cam Ranh Bay was believed to have been the responsibility of Vietnamese MiG-21 Fishbed interceptors based at Bien Hoa.[41]

The question of temporary versus permanent facilities at Cam Ranh Bay has been asked many times. The Soviets began with a bare base operation and have steadily increased their presence. Most of the early growth was in temporary port facility improvements. When the Bears arrived, some improvements were made to existing facilities.

> Soviet construction activity has been limited and visiting Soviet vessels depend on moored support vessels for maintenance, repair, and refueling. However, the Soviets have made some additions to the facilities left behind by the United States including a pier, shelters for nuclear submarines, underground fuel storage tanks, and navigation aids, as well as an electronic monitoring station.[42]

Hanoi inherited from the United States a well-established base that was reportedly 70 percent usable in port and airfield capabilities.[43] The United States had constructed a large logistics supply center and an airfield with two 10,000-foot runways, but many facilities were destroyed before US forces withdrew in 1973.[44] "The US Navy towed away the four movable long piers it had hitched to the end of the port's permanent earthen piers, but existing berthage can still accommodate at least six warships without doubling up."[45]

In June 1979 Nayan Chanda stated, "At present, Vietnam does not have the capability to service or refuel modern warships."[46] Therefore, two of the first projects conducted by the Soviets at Cam Ranh were to establish refueling and servicing capabilities. As part of their first ship deployment, the Soviets brought with them a repair ship to effect minor repairs. In 1980 they deployed a submarine tender and built a pier and shelters for their

submarines.[47] This enabled the submarines to double their days in the South China Sea; they did not have to return to Vladivostok or to facilities in the western Indian Ocean for servicing.[48]

By 1984 it was reported,

> six floating piers were planned for and work began on those in the early '80s. Five have since been put into service while the sixth is near completion. In late 1982 and 1983 respectively, Vietnam took delivery of two floating dry docks, each of which are capable of handling most submarine types as well as cruiser size combatants. The facilities in Cam Ranh Bay have the capability to support 24 ships.[49]

But most of these improvements looked temporary. In an interview referring to his Hanoi visit in February of 1984, Richard Armitage, assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, observed that Soviet improvements were "movable" and included a floating dry dock as well as repair and refueling facilities, and that "[The Soviets] have built their own installations but they have not taken over any large compounds that we built there. They have their own little sections. They still have a sandbag-type appearance."[50]

In February of 1985, however, the report from Secretary Armitage was different. In a speech to the National Defense University Pacific Symposium on 22 February 1985, Armitage said, "There is an obvious military threat in being with these [Soviet] forces at Cam Ranh Bay. . . . Look at the careful yet unimpeded way the Soviets have upped their presence in Vietnam since the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in 1978. . . . The Soviets are intending to stay."[51]

Secretary Armitage's concern is shared by Admiral Crowe.

> We anticipate that these increases will continue. There is a great deal more support equipment in Cam Ranh Bay in terms of warehouses, fuel, communications equipment, ground support equipment, than is necessary just to support their current deployment. And this suggests to me that we will see further improvements, further increases, in the next few years. As a matter of fact, I would go so far as to say that in my mind Cam Ranh Bay is now a permanent Soviet facility.[52]

After the arrival of additional Badgers and the MiG-23 Flogger squadron in late 1984, Admiral Crowe told the Senate Armed Services Committee that "the Soviets continue to increase their use of air facilities in Vietnam. . . . In essence I conclude that the Soviets are [in Cam Ranh Bay] to stay and plan to use this facility on a routine basis for the indefinite future."[53]

Soviet facilities at Cam Ranh were described in *Soviet Military Power—1985*.

> Cam Ranh Bay itself has evolved from an infrequently utilized support facility to a major staging complex for Soviet Pacific Ocean Fleet submarines, ships, and aircraft. The complex, still under development, encompasses missile storage and handling, fueling, communications, barracks, and other support facilities. Permanent facilities to support a deployed squadron of BADGER strike and reconnaissance aircraft are under expansion and could support up to a 30-aircraft, regimental-size force.[54]

Two control questions arise with regard to the Soviet buildup in Cam Ranh Bay: (1) who controls the base—the Soviets or the Vietnamese? and (2) what sort of command and control structure exists for the Soviet forces in Cam Ranh? Neither the Vietnamese nor the Soviets have publicly acknowledged that the Soviets have military basing rights in Cam Ranh Bay.

> The Vietnamese assert that the Soviets do not have base rights in Vietnam, though Foreign Minister Thach, speaking to reporters in Bangkok in July, did say that Hanoi might offer basing rights to the Soviets in Cam Ranh "if there is danger to my country."[55]

Denying the existence of the base was Col Yuri F. Danilov, the senior Soviet military attaché in Tokyo: "The Soviet Union uses Cam Ranh Bay as a liberty port for its Navy to provide rest and relaxation for their crews, for it is not a military base at all."[56] But Admiral Crowe disagreed: "Clearly, the Soviets have made a major investment in Cam Ranh and we have seen a gradual and steady buildup over several years now in that facility, obviously with Vietnamese approval, with Vietnamese permission."[57]

The other question concerns command, control, and communications. As early as June of 1979 *The Far Eastern*

Economic Review reported that "US intelligence sources released information that the Soviets were setting up an electronic listening post there. Apart from keeping track of US and Chinese fleet movements in the South China Sea, it is believed to give the Soviets the ability to pinpoint locations of Chinese command headquarters."[58]

Between early 1983 and late 1984, multiple sources reported that a sophisticated Soviet long-range communication system had been installed at Cam Ranh Bay. Speculation varied from source to source, but the system is generally believed to communicate with long-range reconnaissance and ASW aircraft and with surface vessels and submarines in Southeast Asian waters.[59]

The system is also reported to be a center for intelligence concerning vital information on US movements in the South China Sea and from military bases in the Philippines.[60] There are also reports of a satellite ground station being constructed by the Soviets in Vietnam to provide reliable communications to Moscow.[61] Admiral Crowe testified that the Soviets have at Cam Ranh Bay "a command structure similar to the one in the Indian Ocean, which indicates that Cam Ranh Bay facilities will be used as a forward staging base for power projection into the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean."[62]

The first reported Soviet workers were brought to Cam Ranh Bay to service and refuel ships. In 1978 large numbers of ethnic Chinese left Vietnam, including critical stevedores and dock workers. A year later "several hundred Soviet maritime workers and experts . . . arrived in Vietnam in March to work at ports."[63] In June 1980 "the Vietnamese moved out and 1,500 Soviet military personnel and several hundred Cuban technicians landed in Cam Ranh Bay."[64]

An indication of Soviet forces at Cam Ranh as of October 1984 came from Chinese naval sources: "A battalion-size unit of Soviet naval infantry is deployed at Cam Ranh Bay for security duties. . . with . . . a large-scale reinforcement capability."[65] In April 1985 the DOD confirmed that 2,500 Soviet military advisers were in Vietnam to support the Soviet arms aid program there.[66]

Cam Ranh Bay depends on Soviet airlift and sealift to remain operational. Even though Vietnam and the Soviet Union are on a contiguous landmass, resupply by ground transportation is nonexistent. Since the Chinese rail link to Vietnam was closed early in 1979, Soviet and East European goods must be delivered by air or sea.[67]

Even before the Sino-Vietnamese border conflict and in prelude to the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, John Newman reported the Soviets had begun "a massive airlift of advisors and weapons via Pakistan and India."[68] When the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, the Soviets airlifted Vietnamese troops from Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to Cambodia. They continued massive airlift support for Hanoi by quickly moving troops and materiel from Cambodia to northern Vietnam to repel the Chinese invaders in February and March of 1979.[69] Soviet transports now operate so regularly in Vietnam that they have become part of the background.[70]

Most of Cam Ranh Bay's resupply comes from sealift. In 1985 the Soviets had only 80 naval strategic sealift ships; therefore, Moscow depends on its large merchant fleet for logistics support of Cam Ranh Bay.[71] Ship sightings near Singapore harbor indicate merchant traffic through the Strait of Malacca: 244 in 1982 and 260 in 1983, reflecting a continuing presence of Soviet merchant shipping in the region.[72]

Soviet Capabilities at Cam Ranh Bay in 1985

Access to Cam Ranh Bay has given the Soviet Union a significant strategic foothold at the crux of Southeast Asia's sea lines of communication. The South China Sea, the straits of Malacca, Lombok, and Sunda, and the waters off the coast of Vietnam are vital trade passageways linking East Asia with the Indian Ocean. They are also critical routes to the Soviet far east ports of Vladivostok and Petropavlovsk. Cam Ranh Bay provides the Soviet Pacific Fleet a year-round warm port 2,200 miles closer to the Indian Ocean than Vladivostok, 3,800 miles closer than Petropavlovsk. This helps to offset the winter overfreezing of the

Soviet ports and compensates somewhat for the possibility that Vladivostok would be sealed off behind Northeast Asian chokepoints in time of war. Cam Ranh Bay also serves as a forward-staging base for Soviet power projection into the South China Sea; and Soviet ships can reach the Indian Ocean in half the time required for passage from Vladivostok. This saving of 10 days' steaming time also saves money by shortening Soviet logistics lines, reducing fuel consumption, saving engine wear, and extending the life of nuclear submarines (fig. 4).[73]

Soviet access to Cam Ranh Bay, in Admiral Crowe's view, "has changed the strategic and military calculus in that part of the world a great deal . . . it is a very alarming development and one we will have to deal with now for a protracted period of time."[74] The nuclear capability of Badger aircraft armed with modern bombs, or with standoff long-range nuclear air-to-surface AS-6 Kingfish missiles, adds a tactical complement to Siberian-based SS-20 intermediate-range and submarine-launched ballistic missiles.[75] The SS-20s can reach about half of the Philippines, but most of the ASEAN countries are out of range. Nuclear-armed Badgers at Cam Ranh change the balance in Southeast Asia by placing all the ASEAN countries within range of Soviet nuclear weapons (fig. 5).

The strike aircraft at Cam Ranh are most likely Badger Gs, each of which can carry up to three AS-5 Kelt or AS-6 Kingfish air-to-surface missiles—one on each wing pylon and one on the centerline. The Kelt can carry a 2,200-pound high-explosive (HE) warhead up to 200 miles. The Kingfish's warheads can be either nuclear or HE (2,200 pounds), with a range expected to exceed that of the Kelt.[76] When the six additional Badgers arrived at Cam Ranh in November 1984, the total of 16 aircraft allowed for two waves of five strikes and six support aircraft (either tankers or electronic jammers).

> Soviet tactics still emphasize the "wave attack" style of attack, groups of four or five aircraft in each "wave" approaching into stand-off range under heavy ECM (electronic, chaff, etc.) protection from other Badger versions. Behind this screen of protection, the Soviets hope to be able to overwhelm opponent forces.[77]

Far East

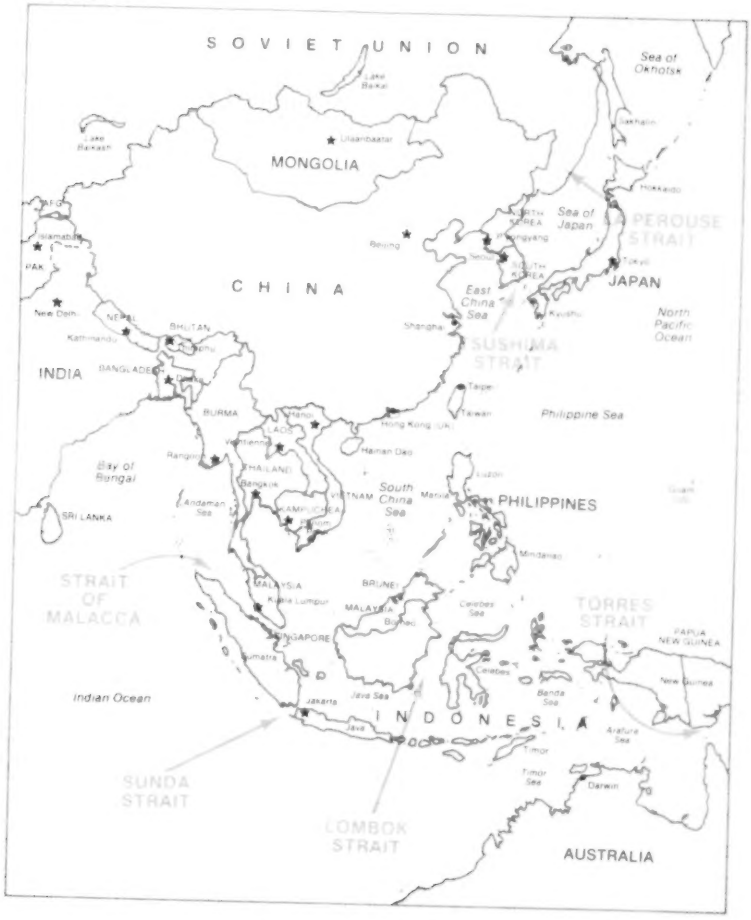

Figure 4. Strategic Chokepoints, Asia/Pacific.

Source: *Soviet Military Power 1985*, 37.

Figure 5. Soviet SS-20 Longer Range Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Deployment and Target Coverage, 1985.

Cam Ranh Bay also provides a Soviet staging base for reconnaissance flights. Access to Vietnam has extended the range of Soviet aerial reconnaissance to some areas of the PRC and even as far south as Australia. American installations in the Philippines are within easy reach of Soviet intelligence flights.[78] Tu-94 Bear D reconnaissance aircraft are employed in maritime reconnaissance and targeting.

> The Bear D's mission is to seek out Western ships and provide targeting data for Soviet surface ships and submarines armed with SS-N-3 Shaddock and newer SS-N-12 Sandbox antiship missiles. The Bear uses a video data link to provide a radar picture of the target ships to the missile shooter, permitting the launching ships or submarine to give in-flight guidance corrections to the missile.[79]

The shore-based communications center at Cam Ranh Bay can be expected to relay Bear D reconnaissance information via satellite to the Soviet far east and Moscow.

The other Bear variant at Cam Ranh Bay, the Bear F, figures prominently in Soviet naval doctrine as a "much-refined" antisubmarine platform.[80] The Tu-142 Bear F, in current production, carries a large payload of sonobuoys, antisubmarine torpedoes, nuclear-depth bombs (presumably),[81] and a magnetic anomaly detector (MAD) in the aircraft's tail section.[82] (A MAD is a device that aids in confirming the presence of ferrous underwater targets; i.e., it can distinguish a submarine from a whale.) With an unrefueled range of 5,200–7,800 nautical miles,[83] the Bear F can stay aloft for extended periods. Operating from Cam Ranh Bay, it can cover all the channels and straits to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, all of Indonesia, and the southern half of Japan.

Milan Vego, a former Yugoslavian naval officer, describes Bear F participation in ASW doctrine as either "independent or in conjunction with other ASW forces."[84] This author believes the principal utility of Cam Ranh-based Bear Fs is independent search.

> The principal methods in the independent employment of Soviet ASW aircraft are search in assigned regions and "on call" search. The former is conducted on the probable transit routes of enemy submarines. The on

> call search is carried out in an area where a submarine was initially detected and tracked by ASW surface ships but contact was subsequently lost.[85]

Vego's analysis of Soviet ASW doctrine supposes that even though the Tu-142 may be the first to actually detect an enemy sub, the attack would most likely be conducted by an ASW surface group because rapid secure tactical communication is reported to be difficult between Soviet surface ships, ASW aircraft, and submerged submarines.[86]

Soviet Il-38 May aircraft are also routinely flown from Cam Ranh Bay. Normally, two (of the up to four deployed Il-38s) are used to patrol a coastal zone using sonobuoys and MADs while interfacing with a single Bear F in the distant search mode.[87]

In addition, types of naval vessels employed by the Soviets in antisubmarine and antishipping warfare have been observed at Cam Ranh Bay; and five or six combatants (cruisers, destroyers, and frigates) are normally observed there.[88] Dr Fred C. Ikle, former under secretary of defense for policy, told Congress in 1982 that "the most modern ships in the Soviet Pacific Fleet, such as *Kara*-class guided missile cruisers, [are] equipped with the latest weapons systems, including stand-off cruise missiles."[89] And the Soviet fleet's modernization trend continues.

> A typical Soviet antisubmarine warfare (ASW) group might consist of two *Udaloy*-class guided-missile destroyers (DDGs) and two *Krivak*-class guided-missile frigates (FFGs) . . . an antiship task group could include a *Slava*-class guided-missile cruiser (CG) and two *Sovremennyy*-class DDGs. Cruise missile submarines and land based reconnaissance and strike aircraft would join in coordinated strikes against intruding surface forces.[90]

Soviet torpedo attack submarines also figure prominently in ASW[91] and enemy commercial shipping. Michael Moodie and Alvin J. Cottrell reported in 1980 that "the USSR has stationed submarines armed with cruise missiles in the vicinity of the Strait of Malacca to sink allied shipping in the event of hostilities."[92] In addition, the Soviets have enough naval assets at Cam Ranh Bay to perform these mission tasks:

- Conduct sea denial operations in selected ocean areas, presumably the South China Sea, to deny freedom of action to Western forces.
- Protect vital sea-lanes of communication.
- Interdict Western SLOCs.[93]

The significance of the squadron of MiG-23 Floggers is that they introduce an all-weather interceptor capability for the defense of Cam Ranh Bay. The MiG-23 has a limited depressed-angle radar,[94] which gives it a look-down, shoot-down capability. Depending on weapons load, the Flogger has a combat radius of 560 to 805 miles,[95] which provides coverage for most of the South China Sea.

One cannot analyze the defense of Cam Ranh Bay without including Vietnamese forces, which are considerably more formidable than they were during the American involvement in Indochina. There are a million soldiers bearing arms in the Vietnamese army—the fourth largest army in the world;[96] and Vietnamese naval forces now include six frigates.[97] The Vietnamese air force comprises over 290 Soviet-manufactured combat aircraft, including four interceptor regiments having 180 MiG-21 Fishbed variants. Analysts estimate that 60–75 of these aircraft are the sophisticated J model.[98]

The Vietnamese ground-based air defense force is estimated at over 60,000 strong. These troops maintain a thousand large-bore antiaircraft artillery pieces coordinated through a hundred ground-controlled intercept sites and supported by 60 SA-2/3 surface-to-air missile sites armed with over 1,700 missiles.[99] It has been reported that Vietnamese crews man at least six SA-2 and/or SA-3 surface-to-air missile sites at Cam Ranh Bay.[100]

The Vietnamese navy was augmented between 1980 and 1982 when four Soviet *Petya*-class frigates were added to two US versions.[101] Other surface craft are estimated to number between 45 and 66 primary vessels.[102]

Other key Vietnamese defensive assets at Cam Ranh Bay include 15 to 25 Soviet-supplied Ka-25 Hormone ASW helicopters.[103] These helicopters perform coastal ASW search by dipping tethered sonar sensors into the ocean and monitoring sonobuoys.[104] They probably operate in coordination with

twin-turboprop Beriev M-12 Mail ASW amphibians.[105] The Mails represent a capability to provide intermediate ASW search between Hormone coastal coverage and that of the Bear F aircraft.

Summary

Cam Ranh Bay provides a significant forward base for Soviet force projection in Southeast Asia. Bagders upset the theater nuclear balance in Southeast Asia with long-range missiles. Conventional offensive and reconnaissance capabilities coupled with some 25 Soviet naval vessels and coordinated by a land-based command and intelligence staff pose a modest threat to US naval forces and a major threat to merchant shipping in the Southeast Asian sea-lanes. Protected by air-to-surface missiles and all-weather fighters and supported by Vietnamese defenses, Cam Ranh Bay has gone from a vulnerable annoyance to a moderately defended threat.

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CHAPTER 5

POTENTIAL SOVIET USE OF CAM RANH BAY

> It is worth remembering that an early World War II British disaster, the sinking off the Malay coast of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*, was inflicted by Japanese airplanes based in Saigon.
>
> Gen T. R. Milton, USAF, Retired

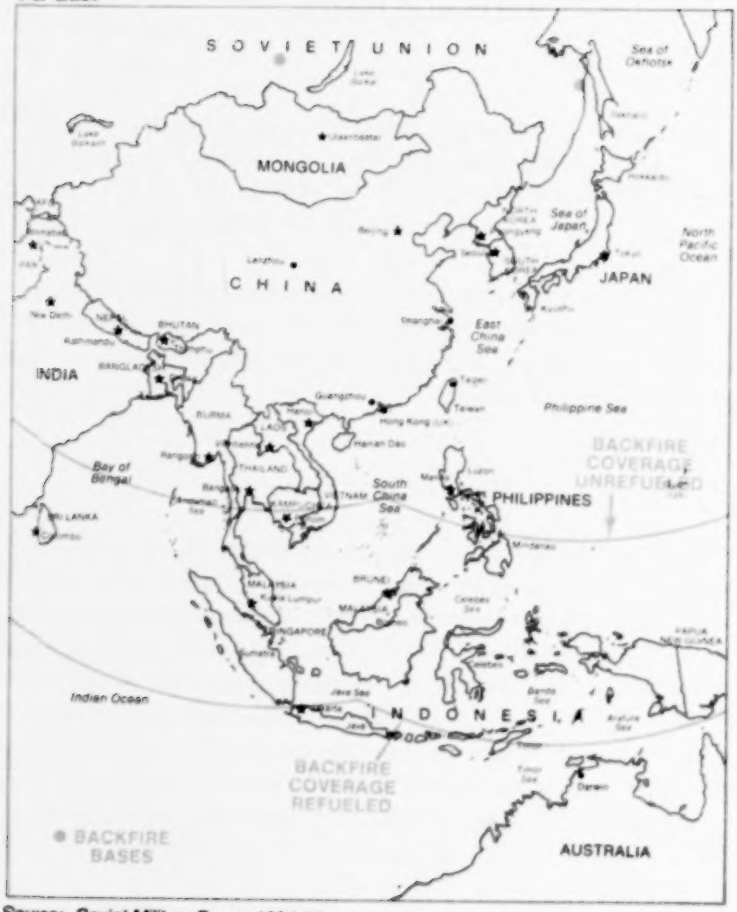
Speculation over more robust increases in the Soviet inventory of military hardware at Cam Ranh must consider several nonmilitary factors, including the Soviet mind-set, politics, geography, and economics.

Worst-Case Forecast

Leading the list for worst-case potential Soviet growth in Vietnam would be deployment of the Tu-22M Backfire bomber. With a reported unrefueled radius of 2,900 nautical miles (carrying air-to-surface missiles), Backfires operating from Cam Ranh Bay could cover virtually all of Australia and most of the South Pacific (fig. 6).[1] Backfires would be much more threatening than Badgers. In addition to having longer range, a larger payload, low-level penetration capability, and high-speed dash, the Backfire is expected to carry most of its own electronic countermeasures (ECM) gear in its large tailcone, thus reducing the need for escort ECM aircraft.[2]

Home porting one of the Soviet Pacific Fleet's VSTOL aircraft carriers—the *Minsk* or the *Novorossiysk*—at Cam Ranh Bay would give continuous antisubmarine warfare coverage of the South

Far East



Source: *Soviet Military Power 1984*, 28.

Figure 6. Backfire Coverage from Soviet Bases (Two-Way Missions).

China Sea and Southeast Asian straits. Further, that carriers would not be hindered by the chokepoints of Northeast Asia or the frozen Soviet far east ports.

If Thailand, Singapore, or Indonesia fielded the US F-16, the small squadron of Soviet Floggers at Cam Ranh Bay would be outclassed. This would probably precipitate Soviet deployment of the sophisticated Su-27 Flanker. Complementing the Flanker would be a frontline attack aircraft—probably the Su-24 Fencer. To protect these offensive assets, air defense may be beefed up to include SA-6s and SA-8s. The Soviets might also deploy the longer-range SA-4 to enhance their surface-to-air defense capability at Cam Ranh.

Enhancements in combat assets at Cam Ranh Bay would also require improvements in communication, command, and control, as well as additional Soviet personnel to employ, maintain, and protect all these systems. The Soviets have all these assets. Will they bring them all to Vietnam? Maybe. Maybe not.

Constraints

What could prevent Moscow from upping the ante at Cam Ranh Bay? The building of the Soviet force there has been gradual—bring in a little, wait until it blends with the background, then bring in another increment. John Stephan describes the Soviets as "committed to exploiting opportunities yet conditioned to exercise caution."[3] He believes they have an acute regard for risk and that they wait for opportunities to move toward their goals. "Moscow will continue to carry out incremental increases in its military capabilities while probing for soft spots . . . where gains can be had at acceptable risks."[4]

The United States, with its friends and allies, imposes significant political constraints on large-scale Soviet expansion in Vietnam. To avoid a risky direct confrontation with the United States, the Soviets will build their military power in Vietnam slowly and carefully. Further, although the Soviets supplied a lot of hardware to Hanoi, they did not overtly participate in the second Indochina war. Nor did Moscow lend its troops to help Hanoi repel Chinese

invaders in 1979. It is therefore unlikely that the Soviets will station a force at Cam Ranh that is vulnerable to Vietnamese conflicts. Whatever the Soviets put at Cam Ranh Bay will be kept small enough to avoid being directly involved in Hanoi's fights.

Aside from the risk of confrontation, it is unlikely that the Soviets will attempt a grand-scale enhancement of military strength in Cam Ranh Bay while the world berates them for invading Afghanistan and shooting down KAL-007. As time passes, however, less world attention is given to these issues; and in any event, the Soviets have paid less attention to world opinion than to their own objectives. When the Afghanistan situation is resolved to Moscow's satisfaction, greater Soviet expansion in Southeast Asia may not be far behind.

There are also political factors that tend to constrain a large Soviet presence at Cam Ranh Bay. First of all, the PRC would feel directly threatened by any increase in Soviet military power in Vietnam. A large Soviet presence in Indochina would signal Beijing that the Soviets directly threaten the southern Chinese flank and continue to support Hanoi's occupation of Cambodia. Beijing's most probable reaction would be a closer move toward the United States. Japan would also feel threatened and would probably close ranks with America. Neither of these moves would please Moscow. Further, a large Soviet expansion would tend to defeat the two leading Soviet policy objectives in Southeast Asia: to enhance ties with Communist Indochina and to increase Soviet influence in ASEAN.

Vietnam itself would feel crowded by additions to the Soviet hardware and soldiers on its soil. Harry Kendall says the "Vietnamese-Soviet relationship is one of oil and water. The glue that holds them together is Soviet opportunism and Vietnamese dependency."[5]

Hanoi's leaders strongly resent Soviet conditions for granting aid to Vietnam. They also removed Cambodian leader Pen Sovan when he was found too accommodating to the Soviets, suggesting that the Vietnamese are not going to let the Soviets develop close relations with either Cambodia or Laos. But while Moscow continues to pay the bills, Hanoi will have to allow Soviet access.

Until the Vietnamese "can feed themselves, expand their international trade market beyond countries in the Soviet orbit and reduce the China threat by a settlement [on Cambodia], the Soviets are likely to stay in Vietnam, extending their use of naval and military facilities, until they decide the price is too high or they are invited out."[6]

The ASEAN reaction to a substantial increase in Soviet assets at Cam Ranh would be to feel more directly threatened—not only by the Soviets, but by the Vietnamese and, to a degree, the Chinese. As the PRC increases in strength and in distance from the Soviets, it becomes more threatening to Indonesia and Malaysia. The overall ASEAN reaction, however—although mixed in individual ASEAN nations—would probably be movement toward the United States and the West. Thus, a stronger Soviet presence in Vietnam would probably work against the Soviet desire to increase "peaceful relations" with ASEAN.

Two of the more tangible factors constraining a large Soviet expansion at Cam Ranh will continue to be geography and logistics. Southeast Asia is a great distance from Soviet ports; long-term logistic support is both critical and vulnerable. The Soviets have substantial internal logistic problems in resupplyin their forces in Siberia and the Soviet far east; they will have even more for Cam Ranh Bay, which needs continuous supply from Vladivostok to maintain its effectiveness as a forward base.[7]

Cam Ranh Bay, isolated from the Soviet far east, is not yet capable of sustaining large-scale operations. Indicators of this are the way in which the Bears moved from Da Nang, the fact that the Badgers were incrementally deployed, and the fact that the Floggers were deployed in a small squadron. All these deployments were dependent on facilities. When the base was able to sustain the aircraft, they deployed. Ships were a different story; the Soviets floated everything they needed. The men lived aboard ship, lessening shore-based infrastructure requirements. In 1984 significant progress was made in construction of weapons and munitions storage facilities, refueling capacity, communications facilities, and barracks.[8] Whether this marks a trend remains to be seen.

The limiting logistic factors are fuels and consumable supplies. The Soviets import all of their fuel and food because the Vietnamese economy is incapable of sustaining itself, agriculturally and industrially. Lack of oil in Vietnam is a leading factor. Until the Soviets begin pumping and refining offshore Vietnamese oil, fuel will continue to be brought into Vietnam by surface vessels.

Economically, the Soviets have their hands full with maintaining their military strength, feeding their own people, and buying the "friendship" of their allies. A large Soviet military operation in Vietnam would only come after the Soviets have met their defense needs in Eastern Europe, Mongolia, the Soviet far east, Afghanistan, Sakhalin, and the Kurile Islands.

Bears, Badgers, and Floggers were deployed to Cam Ranh Bay only when Moscow was sure that the Soviet homeland was securely defended by Backfires, Flankers, and Fencers. Whether Backfires are deployed at Cam Ranh Bay will be governed by production rates and defense priorities—and about half of the 30 Backfires produced each year go to Soviet naval long-range aviation (SNA).[9] Since the Badgers at Cam Ranh Bay are optimized for their maritime role by carrying air-to-surface/antiship missiles comparable to the AS-4 Kitchen carried by the Backfire,[10] deployment of Backfires to Cam Ranh Bay is unlikely until the SNA forces have enough of them to securely defend the Soviet far east homeland.

Badgers are an adequate threat to any potential adversary in Southeast Asia. While Backfires could threaten US naval and maritime supply vessels across the Pacific, Badgers could threaten these same vessels when the approached Soviet ports or transited predictable sea-lanes nearer Cam Ranh Bay. Since the Badger force already at Cam Ranh Bay can threaten virtually all shipping in Southeast Asia, it is unlikely that the Soviets would risk a top-of-the-line weapon system—at least not until the low-level ingress and high-speed dash capabilities of the Backfire become necessary to offset the *Aegis*-class integrated weapon systems on US naval vessels (and then only when production rates allow).

In speculating on the home-porting potential of a SOVPACFLT *Kiev*-class carrier at Cam Ranh Bay, the author believes the *Minsk* and *Novorossiysk* are needed closer to Vladivostok to guard the Northeast Asian SLOCs. Such a mission would preclude home porting of either carrier in Vietnam.

What would constrain the deployment of advance fighter bombers and interceptor aircraft to Vietnam? Probably not much; production rates of the Fencer and Flanker are expected to continue at a high rate, which would allow for Cam Ranh deployment of those aircraft earlier than the Backfires. US deployments of longer-range fighters at Clark AB—or the equipping of Thailand, Singapore, or Indonesia with F-16 aircraft—may provoke the Soviets to deploy more capable aircraft to Cam Ranh.

The same logic applies to air defense system improvements for Cam Ranh but there are logistic and production constraints. For the time being, the in-place SA-2 and SA-3 systems are adequate and there is no need for the Soviets to risk deploying more capable SAM systems from the Soviet homeland.

One other vulnerability that has an effect on the capabilities of Soviet Pacific Fleet forces is the lack of blue-water naval allies in Southeast Asia. The Vietnamese navy's 45 to 70 vessels hardly constitute a blue-water navy.[11] Cam Ranh Bay provides a forward deployment base but does not make up for the Soviets' lack of allies in the region, and the question remains whether the Soviets would leave up to 55 vessels in the Indian Ocean, Cam Ranh Bay, and the South China Sea if there were direct threats to the Soviet far east. They might bring these vessels closer to home to bolster their defense posture. Moscow's decision would be easier if it had a real blue-water ally in Southeast Asia to guard Soviet interests in the Southeast Asian SLOCs.

Realistic Growth Potential

Subject to constraints, the Soviets will press their potential in Cam Ranh—but always with regard to risk. Growth will continue to be incremental. The most likely addition will be another 15 Badgers, bringing the complement to 30 aircraft (a Soviet naval

aviation regiment). These aircraft would provide two additional "waves" of strike aircraft plus additional tankers to refuel all types of SNA aircraft—not a sensational increase, but one that involves minimum risk yet poses a threat to Pacific Air Forces and the US Seventh Fleet.

Look for additional Floggers and the possible transfer of these aircraft to the Vietnamese. Advanced Soviet interceptors and fighter-bombers will be deployed only when defense of the homeland is secure, but any increase in tactical air capabilities will likely be accompanied by more sophisticated air defense and ground control facilities and staff.

Another likely Soviet move at Cam Ranh Bay is an increase in the number of Bear D reconnaissance aircraft, which will expand Soviet reconnaissance of US naval activity and broaden reconnaissance support of the Soviet Pacific Fleet. Also, deployment of Bear G aircraft would be less risky than bringing Backfires to Cam Ranh Bay; and the Bear G carries the same AS-4 Kitchen missiles as does the Backfire. Bear H aircraft equipped with long-range cruise missiles are not likely to be deployed at Cam Ranh because they can accomplish the same strategic mission from Soviet airfields.[12] Backfires may be positioned at Cam Ranh Bay if Moscow feels provoked, but any such deployment will probably be temporary until they are available in sufficient numbers to replace the Badger.

The current pattern of Soviet naval deployment is expected to continue. About 20–25 naval units patrol the Indian Ocean while 25–30 patrol the South China Sea. Soviet warships in the Pacific fleet have been steady in total numbers since 1983.[13]

The *Kiev*-class VSTOL carriers *Minsk* and *Novorossiysk* will remain home ported in Vladivostok but can be expected to show the flag routinely throughout the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. Also, look for more joint Soviet-Vietnamese amphibious exercises. Besides exploring the capabilities of the *Ivan Rogov*-class amphibious assault ships, amphibious exercises remind Vietnam's neighbors of a more threatening aspect of Hanoi's already sizable armed forces.

The most likely submarine activity at Cam Ranh Bay will be regular visits by nuclear-powered and diesel-powered attack submarines. The nuclear subs have the speed and ordnance to track and attack both submarines and surface vessels. The diesel-powered subs will probably operate throughout the vulnerable Southeast Asian SLOCs in an ambush-and-escort role.

Regarding Cam Ranh Bay itself, the trend since mid-1984 has been toward improvements in repair capabilities, facilities for refueling, barracks, weapon storage capabilities, and supply facilities. Potential developments include nuclear weapon storage areas, runway repair capabilities, use of other Indochinese airfields for dispersal areas, and renovation/construction of aircraft revetments.

Besides Soviet military initiatives in Cam Ranh Bay, there will probably be a steady increase in Soviet merchant fleet activity in Southeast Asia. Moscow will pursue Soviet-Asian commercial maritime relations to gain routine acceptance of Soviet presence throughout the region.

> The small tentacles of Soviet power—the fishing fleet, research and survey vessels, merchant ships, and intelligence collectors—are also already being felt in major seaports, so that Soviet presence is becoming an accepted part of the background.[14]

Finally, Cam Ranh Bay is expected to figure more prominently as a staging base. The Soviets' desire to parlay merchant and fishing port access into future military basing opportunities has already been realized in the region; their presence is observed in Vanuatu and Kiribati in the South Pacific.

Even with the Soviet introduction of Floggers and additional Badgers, the United States continues to have the military capability to knock out Cam Ranh Bay. The main problem facing US decisionmakers is determining which military resources should be temporarily reallocated from other tasks to do the job. More forces are required than were needed in 1983, and most of them are dedicated to other purposes. Factors complicating US strategy are the increasing sophistication of Soviet defenses, the distance

between Cam Ranh Bay and US facilities, and the requirement for early detection of Soviet aircraft.

The Soviet bear in Vietnam demands attention; and although not 10 feet tall, it must not be overlooked.

NOTES

1. *Soviet Military Power—1985* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985), 34.

2. John W. R. Taylor, "Gallery of Soviet Aerospace Weapons," *Air Force Magazine* 68, no. 3 (March 1985): 98.

3. John J. Stephan, "Asia in the Soviet Conception," in *Soviet Policy in East Asia*, ed. Donald S. Zagoria (New Haven, Conn : Yale University Press, 1982), 54.

4. Ibid., 56.

5. Harry Kendall, "Vietnamese Perception of the Soviet Presence," *Asian Survey* 23, no. 9 (September 1983): 1060.

6. Kensuke Ebata, "Cam Ranh Bay—Forward Base of the Soviet Pacific Fleet," *Jane's Defence Weekly* 2, no. 2 (21 July 1984): 66.

7. *Soviet Military Power—1985*.

8. Ibid.

9. Taylor, 97–98, 109.

10. *The Military Balance 1984–1985* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1984), 111; and Gordon Jacobs, "Big Increase in Soviet Aid for Vietnamese," *Jane's Defence Weekly* 2, no. 15 (20 October 1984): 671.

11. *Soviet Military Power—1985*, 116–17.

12. Taylor, 99, 109.

13. *Soviet Military Power—1985*, 8–9, 116–17.

14. "US Navy vs Soviet Fleet—How They Stack Up," *U.S. News & World Report* 94, no. 13 (4 April 1983): 56.